Charleston

AND THE EMERGENCE OF MIDDLE-CLASS CULTURE IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA

Jennifer L. Goloboy

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Jennifer L. Goloboy

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Introduction

In New York City, a few days after the Fourth of July, 1842, Lydia Maria Child sat down to record an interview with one of the strangest men she had ever met. Child was an author of children's books, proscriptive literature, and novels who would have grown wealthy from the nineteenth-century appetite for popular reading if she had not repeatedly sacrificed success and financial stability for the sake of the antislavery movement. Today she might be best remembered as the editor of Harriet Jacobs's slave narrative, but her most controversial stand was her support of interracial marriage, a recurring theme in both her fiction and her nonfiction.[1]

Child had been intrigued by a pamphlet by a Southern merchant and planter, Zephaniah Kingsley, that argued for the benefits of encouraging "amalgamation" and liberalizing the legal rights of free people of color. As Child summarized the pamphlet, Kingsley claimed that intermarriage would "not only [strengthen] the bond of union between castes that otherwise naturally war upon each other, but [greatly improve] the human race" by melding the best traits of both races.[2] Child also learned that Kingsley considered himself married to an African-born woman (though the marriage had no legal status) and was planning a settlement in Haiti, where he believed his children would have more opportunity for living among others as equals. How wonderful, Child thought, to find a Southerner who shared her ideas!

But Child apparently did not know many of the interesting details of Kingsley's biography. The son of a Loyalist Charleston merchant who

had been impoverished by the Revolution, Kingsley had reached adulthood desperate to make his fortune. He had changed his citizenship three times within ten years to profit from the trading opportunities of the Napoleonic era. His marriage was also more complicated and less laudable than Child knew. Kingsley began his relationship with Anja Kingsley when she was his thirteen-year-old slave, only freeing her when she was an eighteen-year-old who had borne three of his children. He had children with other enslaved women, whom he also might have considered his wives.[3]

Meeting Kingsley was a disorienting experience for the Yankee abolitionist, because her interviewee did not fit within the paradigm of the repentant slaveholder. While it was true that he was trying to create a colony for freed slaves in Haiti, he was financing this colony by working other slaves, whom he did not plan to free, on his plantation in Florida. Nor did Kingsley regret his years in the slave trade, except for some tragic excesses. As he explained, "To do good in the world, we *must* have money," and the slave trade had made him wealthy. Pure goodness was an impossible dream. "The best we can do . . . is to balance evils judiciously," he said.[4] Child could only think that Kingsley was too cosmopolitan to be moral. As she wrote, "Probably this mixture with people of all creeds and customs, combined with the habit of looking *outward* for his guide of action, may have bewildered his moral sense, and produced his system of 'balancing evils!'"[5] If only, Child lamented as she left him, Kingsley had listened to the divine monitor of conscience implanted by God, instead of the delusive principles of the marketplace.

Devout, socially progressive, Northern—Child combined all the traits that we imagine in the nineteenth-century middle class. This book argues that Kingsley, worldly, pragmatic, and Southern, also embodied the middle-class experience. It rethinks the origins of the early American middle class, moving away from the idea that it was a product of the nineteenth century and tracing its roots to the "independent trading households" of postmedieval Europe.[6]

This book focuses on merchants in Charleston, South Carolina, in the Revolutionary Era. I define merchants as they themselves did: men engaged in overseas trade. Related occupations included other trades involving the exchange of goods: shopkeepers, which meant retail traders; factors, who represented planters in the sale of goods to merchants; and auctioneers. Merchants often worked in these trades as well. Being a merchant also gave a man the skills to be an "attorney" (manager) for an overseas employer, as well an accountant, banker, insurance agent, or securities broker.

Here I should pause to clarify what I mean by "middle class." Part of the problem with the term is that middle-class culture and the rise of middle-class professions antedated both a consistent terminology and a sense that society was best defined as three competing groups. Like their European cousins, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Americans knew that there was a distinctive culture that belonged to "independent trading households," where the men worked in professional and artisanal businesses. However, they lacked a common term for this culture until well into the antebellum era.[7] The term "middle class" seems to have become common in the 1850s, though earlier uses exist, such as the well-known Charleston merchant Henry Laurens's 1774 reference to "our Brethren the good people of England of the midle Class."[8] Furthermore, the idea that society was divided into thirds (as opposed to, say, fourths) and that the three classes had conflicting interests lagged behind the birth of this trading culture.[9] For example, in 1751 James Glen, governor of South Carolina, divided society into four groups according to their levels of consumption, calling the lowest level those "who have a bare subsistence," the "poor or middling sort of people."[10] It is only in the nineteenth century that bourgeois culture became associated with the middle third of American society, and this middle third saw itself in conflict with lazy, amoral, and disdainful elites and rowdy, uncontrollable workers.

Another problem with the term "middle class" is that it is used to mean many different things, often at the same time. Max Weber's analysis of classes and status groups is helpful for disentangling the knot. "Middle class" is sometimes used to describe an economic class, which according to Max Weber's definition was based on the individual's likelihood of "procuring goods," "gaining a position in life," and "finding inner satisfactions," "which derives from the relative control over goods and skills and from their income-producing uses within a given economic order."[11] In this sense, the middle class refers to people in the professions, manufacturing, and business who have enough money to live without want and with some luxury. (What luxury means, of course, is always a matter for debate.) In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, most artisans found it increasingly difficult to earn enough to remain middle class. Middle-class income became associated with nonmanual work, which implied the acquisition of literacy and numeracy.[12] As many historians have noted, however, there was a considerable amount of cultural construction involved in defining "nonmanual." Young clerks transported goods, for example, even though they liked to pretend that this was a porter's job.[13]

We also use "middle class" to refer to a "status group," which, as Weber explained, was unified by "an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges," based on "formal education" and "hereditary or occupational prestige," especially "style of life." Weber concluded that a class and a status group were not quite the same thing, though they were related: "Money and an entrepreneurial position are not in themselves status qualifications and the lack of property is not in itself a status disqualification."[14]

Nevertheless, there were some constants in the middle-class "style of life." The early American middle class was unified by the self-perceived possession of various Franklinian traits: "frugality, temperance, chastity, silence, tranquility, humility, cleanliness, moderation, order, resolution, sincerity, justice, and industry." These traits purportedly gave men in "independent trading households" the best chance to survive economically. Wealthy and poor Americans believed themselves to be middle class because they valued self-control and diligent, steady work at a primarily nonmanual profession.[15]

The bourgeois "style of life" has changed at different periods. In Germany, for example, middle-class men frequently engaged in dueling to defend their honor, while their British peers disdained the practice.[16] In England, being middle class in the nineteenth century implied devoutness and the separation of home and work. But as Dror Wahrman wrote, "It was distinct and historically significant circumstances . . . that at a given moment invested with significance the association of the 'middle class' with what is often described as 'bourgeois values' (used as shorthand for such views and norms as domesticity and evangelical religiosity)."[17] Over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the idea of the middle class would pick up and discard various associated traits such as religious devotion, gentility, sociability, independence, morality, and progressivism while holding on to the core market-oriented values that would help members of the middle class function in the business world.

This book chooses the second path and defines the middle class as a status group, with values that extended far beyond the established men of middling wealth into the poor and ambitious young men who haunted the port cities of the early republic, searching for their chance at wealth and power. Inspired by recent interest in early nineteenth-century business culture, this study puts work at the center of middle-class history.[18] Above all, I hope to dispel the idea that "middle-class" inherently implied "nice": economically and socially progressive, engaged in a nurturing and close family life. To be middle class was to be possessed of the values

that enabled survival in the market economy, and these values shifted under external pressure.

Why study Charleston's merchants as exemplars of the middle class? The essential problem of the man in business was to persuade potential trading partners to work with him rather than his competitors. This problem was at its extreme (and is best documented) for merchants, who rarely if ever saw their trading partners and communicated primarily by letter. To put it bluntly, how do you get a man who's never met you before to trust you with his money? Merchants appealed to shared values in their letters and found connections beyond the raw necessities of buying and selling. For example, the Charlestonian Josiah Smith was apparently delighted that his ideas on child-rearing corresponded so exactly with those of his London friend, William Manning:

> am pleasd to find that your Sentiments & mine Coincide in placing Our Sons under the Care of Honest Clergymen, in Order that their morals may be the more properly directed & Securd them. the Venality of the Time will otherwise afford from Laymen. You & I [illegible] are now Equal as to the Number of children, being now Five—Three Sons & Two Daughters, and may each of us enjoy Comfortable Hopes of them, that they will not be led astray in these days of almost General Depravity—[19]

Smith even found meaning in the fact that the number of children in each family was identical; that was another sign that his values corresponded with Manning's. Epistolary attempts to connect across the Atlantic developed the essential values of the middle class.[20]

Middle-class values transcended the wealth of individual trading partners, because it was useful for all concerned to pretend that aspirational communalities made current financial status unimportant. Young traders promised that they were just like their elders; rich old men connected with the new merchants who would extend their firms into the future. However, the idea of the middle class as a status group could never be totally detached from economic concerns. Middle-class values shifted according to the economic outlook; in slow periods, merchants testified to the benefits of prudence, for example. In general, colonial men tried to exude a respectful willingness to serve; men of the early republic, an almost piratical eagerness to make good; and antebellum merchants, a polished professionalism. Much of this book looks at how the economic prospects of merchants shaped the middle-class culture they were creating.

Considering Charleston's merchants enables us to rethink the middle class in light of the new history of capitalism and its commitment to reintegrating the Old South into the world economy. This project is part of a recent upswell of interest in the Southern middle class that rejects earlier interpretations that claimed there was no such thing.[21] Much of this research has been about the late antebellum period and has successfully revealed the presence of a caste of professionals that sought to bring economic development and progress to the Old South, without abandoning slavery. The historians Jonathan Wells, Frank Byrne, Gregg Kimball, and Jennifer Green have demonstrated that men like William Gregg and J. D. B. DeBow were only the best-known figures in a much broader movement.[22] These historians have generally focused on the late antebellum period, and I believe the roots of middle-class culture in the South can be found much earlier. Furthermore, these studies generally link the Southern middle class with "economic and cultural modernization," whereas my research shows a middle class less interested in long-term progress than in short-term economic survival in turbulent times.[23] Nevertheless, research on the Southern middle class has demonstrated that the Old South was neither precapitalist nor isolated from the rest of American culture. This is a particularly important consideration in South Carolina, whose historians have attributed the decline of Charleston to an antimarket local culture.

We seem to have gotten the history of the American middle class wrong—or at least incomplete. Colonial historians have shown the importance of the profit motive in bringing men to America. Most of colonial society was inherently market oriented and very mobile.[24] And yet our studies of the middle-class experience in the early nineteenth century has been shaped by an earlier generation's understanding of the essential colonial America—small-town New England, isolated from the larger global marketplace. The middle class, we have been told, was born in the collision of small-town innocence with urban market culture and the moral revulsion that necessarily resulted.[25] This does an injustice to the young men who came to the city from the plantation or crossed the Atlantic from Scotland. Furthermore, it may not even be fair to the New England farmers, who were far less self-sufficient and isolated from the market than we once imagined.[26] If we want to write the experience of the middle class in America, we should include the South, not only Lydia Maria Child, but also Zephaniah Kingsley.

The previous generation of historians was fascinated by the idea of isolates from the capitalist system. This led to an interest in the culture of

these isolates as a form of resistance to capitalism and an endless consideration of whether or not this resistance was real. One of these supposed isolates was the Old South, which Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese famously said was "in but not of the capitalist world."[27] The middle-class home was another one of these supposed isolates, and like the Old South, it was treated as not subject to change and growth.[28] The historian Ann Douglas lamented in her study of Victorian culture, "The problems of the women correspond to mine with a frightening accuracy that seems to set us outside the processes of history."[29] Previous historians have debated whether middle-class values triggered a genuine rejection of capitalism (as sometimes in the abolitionist movement) or not (as when these values were used as a cudgel to beat the working class).[30]

More recent historians have taken pains to reintegrate these supposed isolates back into the larger economic system and therefore back into historical time. My project attempts to treat both the culture of the counting-house and the culture of the parlor as endlessly shifting middle-class responses to the demands of the larger world economy. Most important, I want to dispel the sense that there was a middle class that was formed, reached its apogee, and then stayed constant.

A final issue extends outside the time period under consideration. A disproportionate number of Americans today claim to be middle class. Elsewhere, I have argued that changes in the nature of middle-class identity in the early republic gave being middle class a broader appeal.[31] This book uses Charleston's merchants to expand my earlier argument.

The first chapter covers merchants in the circumscribed world of colonial Charleston.[32] Colonial merchants traded within the British Empire and were carefully deferential to their perceived superiors. Chapter 2 elucidates the surprising role of the gadfly John Wilkes in inspiring the rebellion of Charleston's middle class and reveals that separating from the British Empire caused an economic disaster.

The third chapter traces Charleston's forgotten post-Revolution boom, based on finance, the slave trade, the cotton trade, and the neutral trade. In comparison to their colonial predecessors, postwar merchants were wilder, drunker, and less concerned about legality—but they still should be considered part of the middle class. Chapter 4 explores in more depth the close business friendships merchants built and their comparatively emotionally distant family relationships.

Chapter 5 reveals how the War of 1812 ended most forms of mercantile business in Charleston, with the exception of the cotton trade.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at why the cotton trade did not give rise to a wealthy group of merchants in Charleston. It ends with a consideration of the Denmark Vesey incident and how distinctive the Southern middle class really was in its view of slavery.

It was a gift to have the training, time, and support to write this book. One of the pleasures of completing this project is that I have the chance to thank the many people who helped me over its gestation, beginning with my graduate program at Harvard. First, I would like to say that I wish Donald Fleming and Bill Gienapp were here to read this book. Remembering Donald's book-packed office still makes me smile. Bill was the kindest and most generous adviser I could have had, and his warmth, knowledge, and humor inspire me to this day. I would also like to thank Sven Beckert for stepping in and helping me to the finish line—and also for loving merchants. Thank you to History of American Civilization departmental secretary Christine McFadden for making Harvard a warmer place.

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1 / "Very humble Servants": Colonial Merchants and the Limits of Middle-Class Power

In the spring and early summer of 1763, Hogg & Clayton, a mercantile firm based in Charleston, was drumming up new business. The partners wrote to their most promising contacts, or "friends," that they wanted to import dry goods and export Carolina produce. Again and again, in the most self-deprecating tones, they promised their entire willingness to please: "We make you a Tender of our Services we would Endeavour to Convince you how much we are, Sir Your very humble Servants."[1] Like other middle-class merchants, they attempted to charm their contacts into doing business with them, rather than their competitors, by writing letters that combined a lively intelligence with willing deference.

This chapter explores the reasons for Hogg & Clayton's epistolary style. Colonial Charles Town's merchants believed themselves to be residents of a colony that, much like its peers in the Caribbean, produced valuable staple products that could not be grown in the mother country. They perceived themselves to be transporting information as well as goods throughout the Atlantic World. They expected to lead restricted but useful middle-class lives and to pass their status on to their children.

Merchants in colonial Charles Town could be successful—even remarkably successful—but their lives were stunted by the social and economic assumptions of the British Empire. In order to benefit the mother country, colonial trade with other European powers was limited and channeled through British ports. South Carolina's rice and indigo were grown for British profit. Similarly, as middle-class men, merchants faced cultural restrictions. Even for the most successful merchants,

wealth never trumped birth. But when we consider whether these merchants were really as lacking in ambition as they claimed, we can see signs of both contentment with and rejection of a middle-class role.

Merchants and Mercantilism

The demands of South Carolina's economy shaped Charleston's merchants. They served South Carolina's plantations by importing what was necessary to sustain them and by exporting their products. Colonial merchants exported rice, indigo, deerskins, and naval stores. They imported the manufactured goods that South Carolina did not produce. Finally, they imported the huge number of slaves that made Sullivan's Island in Charleston's harbor, in Peter Wood's words, "the Ellis Island of black Americans."[2]

Charleston's merchants were supposed to work within the British mercantilist system. Mercantilists sought to increase the power of a nation through foreign trade, by ensuring that it imported more specie than its rivals did, and exported more goods. The country with the most gold was the winner. Colonies could help this process by consuming goods that were manufactured in the mother country and by sending raw materials home that had previously been obtained from foreign lands.[3]

As the historian Peter Coclanis has written, "South Carolina was an exemplary mercantilist colony."[4] Charleston's merchants felt the influence of mercantilism most strongly in two ways: the restrictions of the Navigation Acts and the bounties given for certain staples. The Navigation Acts, a product of the seventeenth century, mandated that goods be shipped from the colonies in British bottoms and enumerated certain goods that could be shipped only from the colonies to Britain or to other British colonies.[5] South Carolina's most important colonial export, rice, was named an enumerated commodity in 1705. In 1731, this restriction was relaxed so that rice could be exported to ports south of Spain's Cape Finisterre. After 1763, rice could also be exported to the foreign West Indies.

Despite the restrictions, being part of the empire had its benefits. To encourage the development of crops deemed important for the empire, the British provided bounties for their import. This encouraged the development of a trade in naval stores (especially the tall American trees that became British masts) and indigo.

Though the statistics on the ethnic origins of colonial Charleston's merchants are slim, it is clear that not all merchants were English.

Especially after the 1720s, a population of Scots merchants was resident in Charleston, which may have encouraged direct trade in goods from Scotland to South Carolina.[6] R. C. Nash has calculated that between 1762 and 1767 about 22 percent of Charleston's merchants were third-generation Huguenot immigrants. By the late colonial period, however, these men generally traded with English merchants based in London rather than Huguenots overseas.[7]

Because little was manufactured in South Carolina (or in any colony, for that matter), merchants imported goods of all kinds. Throughout colonial America, cloth and foodstuffs, especially alcohol, represented much of what was imported. "Probably nowhere else in the 'civilized' world did inhabitants produce their own fabric in such a primitive fashion and manufacture such a small amount of the textiles and the clothing they consumed," as they did in the British North American colonies, comments Carole Shammas.[8] A majority of the goods exported from Britain to the thirteen colonies that would become the United States were woolens and linens.[9] South Carolinians particularly needed "slave cloth," a rough, unattractive, but durable cloth purchased annually to outfit slaves on the plantations. As Hogg & Clayton explained, "Our consumpt for these Articles is in the Fall but our Planters to have time enough for the making up of their Negroes clothes frequently chuse to purchase about the beginning of August."[10]

Merchants also served as a conduit for bringing genteel goods to America. Though eighteenth-century America could not be called a consumer culture on the same level as our own, as the country became wealthier, Americans began to collect elegant pottery, fabric, and food that would give them pleasure and comfort and display their refinement. Despite a growing number of local firms capable of making luxury goods like silverware and furniture, there was still a market for the importation of British luxury goods.[11] The Charleston firm Leger & Greenwood often ordered such products from their London contacts, such as the guns, concert violin, and enameled servingware they requested in one order.[12] Perhaps their most unusual request was a tombstone to be ornamented with "two or three detached Lines in Verse Expressive of a very Honest and Upright Man"—the presumption being that their British correspondents could best choose such verses.[13]

But we need not overemphasize the extent to which Carolina's consumers were buying luxury goods. Tea—portable, affordable, and ritually consumed—was one of the status markers of colonial America. Comparing the percentage of tea imported to the Carolinas from England to the

percentage of all goods imported to the Carolinas from England suggests whether Carolinians were spending most of their money on genteel items. Table 1.1 suggests that not only were Carolinians heavy importers of English goods, but, except for 1771, they were proportionately underconsuming genteel goods like tea. Presumably this is the result of the relative poverty of the backcountry and, more important, the restrictions on the state's predominantly enslaved black majority. The mainstay of merchant importers' business was not luxury goods but necessary manufactures.

Young, ambitious merchants just starting off in business were often drawn to the dry goods trade, where they could receive goods on credit from British commission merchants.[14] Dry goods importers were often paid by their planter customers in staple crops rather than cash. These merchants could then pay their British creditors in staple crops rather than bills of exchange; their profits were not so dependent on the exchange rate as were, for example, the profits of Philadelphia merchants, who had no such valuable staple crop.[15] On the other hand, they might be forced to buy staples whether or not they wanted them, as Josiah Smith explained to James Poyas, who had moved from Charleston to England.

> You certainly forget the custom of Dry-Good Merchants in Carolina, who are frequently obliged to take the Planter's Commodities in a way of Payment, on the best terms they can make, & oftentimes under the Necessity of purchasing their whole Crop of Indico, at the heighth of the Market, paying them a great part in Cash, that they may thus secure their past Year's Debt & engage their further Custom, for 'tis now a common thing for our Planters in general (who increase Pride with Riches) to deal only where they are most humour'd.[16]

The historian Thomas Doerflinger's assessment that this branch of business was less lucrative than the export trade, because there was a perpetual glut of dry goods in Philadelphia, seems to be accurate for Charleston as well.[17] However, even merchants whose primary interests were elsewhere became involved in the dry goods trade. Established merchants commonly joined partnerships investing in stores outside Charleston. William Ancrum was a partner in a group that invested in, among other things, stores in Camden and Chatham.[18] Josiah Smith was a partner in a store in Beaufort.[19]

Novice merchants could also be exporters. As Hogg & Clayton wrote, "We Shall be Extremely glad to Serve you here either in the purchase of

Table 1.1. Tea and Other Exports to the Carolinas, 1763–1773

Year	*Amount of Tea Exported from England to Thirteen Continental Colonies, in Pounds*	*Amount of Tea Exported from England to Carolinas, in Pounds*	*Percentage to Carolinas*	*Total Exports to Thirteen Colonies from England, in Pounds Sterling (constant value)*	*Exports from England to Carolinas, in Pounds Sterling (constant value)*	*Percentage to Carolinas*
1763	188,785	22,860	12%	1,631,997	250,132	15%
1764	489,252	18,374	3.8%	2,249,710	305,808	14%
1765	518,424	36,067	7.0%	1,944,114	334,709	17%
1766	361,001	20,112	5.6%	1,804,333	296,732	16%
1767	480,376	24,261	5.1%	1,900,923	244,093	13%
1768	873,744	34,639	4.0%	2,157,218	289,868	13%
1769	229,439	12,982	5.7%	1,336,122	306,600	23%
1770	110,386	1,175	1.1%	1,925,571	146,273	7.6%
1771	362,257	36,385	10%	4,202,472	409,169	10%
1772	264,882	22,916	8.7%	3,012,635	449,610	15%
1773	739,221	83,959	11%	2,079,412	344,859	17%

Source: Table Eg 1152–59, tea exported from England, by importing colony, 1761–75; and Table Eg 429–42, value of imports into and exports from England, by colony or locality, 1693–1791, in *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 5–762, 5–763, 5–711.

our produce procuring freights for vessels you may be Concern'd in or any other Bussines you have to transact in this part of the world."[20] This trade was available to novices because of an unusual quirk in Charleston's trade. In other plantation colonies, the wealthiest planters tended to sell their crops in Britain, through British merchants working on commission. Virginia, for example, developed no port as important as Charleston to handle its tobacco crop. Rice planters, on the other hand, sold their crops in Charleston, often using factors to broker the sale. The purchasers were export merchants, most of whom were working on commission for British merchants. Like Charleston, Northern colonial ports developed a population of local merchants, but Northern merchants tended to export on their own account and risk rather than on commission.[21]

Among mainland colonies, South Carolina was valuable. According to the historians James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, from 1768 to 1772, the lower South, which includes South Carolina, was the second-largest exporter, at £551,949. Its exports were dwarfed by those of the upper South, at £1,046,883, but were larger than the middle colonies', at £526,545, New England's, at £439,101, and the Canadian provinces', at £183,546. All the mainland colonies' exports were far less than the value of the West Indies', at least £3.9 million during the same years.[22] Before the Revolution, rice, indigo, deerskins, and naval stores were the predominant goods shipped from Charleston. Between 1768 and 1772, rice composed 64 percent of the average annual value of goods exported from South Carolina, indigo 25 percent, deerskins 4 percent, and naval stores 1 percent.[23]

Native Americans, especially the Creeks, were the main manufacturers of deerskins. While this had once been the most critical local trade, by the 1760s, it was suffering from overhunting, greed, and decreased demand for deerskins in Europe.[24]

Naval stores were an especially important export in the early eighteenth century, when the British heavily subsidized their cultivation.[25] By the later part of the century, their importance declined, but merchants continued to profit from the sale of forest products from their plantations. According to Emma Hart's analysis of tradesmen's plantations, 34 percent of them were dedicated to lumber, compared to 25 percent of all plantations.[26]

In general, however, deerskins and naval stores were crops of lesser importance. As R. C. Nash has written, "It was rice and indigo which generated the rapid growth of the Carolina low country in the eighteenth

century, and which made the Carolina planters the richest social group in British America."[27] The boom in indigo started in the 1740s and revived in the 1750s, when war cut off French exports. British duties on foreign indigo supported the rapid expansion of the crop until the Revolution.[28]

Rice was colonial South Carolina's most important crop, though it was primarily used in Europe during times of dearth. Between the French and Indian War and the Revolution, the rice trade experienced a boom as a result of poor harvests in Britain and the rest of Europe, opening the British internal market to rice.[29] The shifting nature of the demand for rice ensured that the most successful merchants kept well advised about both the size of the crop and the political and economic issues in Europe. Good information was key to mercantile success.

An average of half the rice exported from Charleston between 1762 and 1772 went to Great Britain, but a large portion of this was then reexported from the mother country (Table 1.2).[30] Regions that really did relish rice, the Iberian Peninsula and the West Indies, took an average of less than 20 percent each through direct export from Charleston. In this way the Navigation Acts shaped Charleston's trade.

The wealthiest and most successful merchants were drawn to the slave trade, where the profits were greater and repayment easier to secure. The dry goods merchants Leger & Greenwood explained, "The Dry Good Merchant is in the rear of the Negro Merchant. he is the last paid of the two in the year. the planter will make a push the Earliest part of the Season to reduce the Negro Bond, whereas he will lay by a Certain part of his Crop by Waiting the rise of the Market to pay us with which most frequently does not fall out till late in the Summer."[31] A little over 8 percent of the active merchants in Charleston in 1769 were slave dealers.[32]

Driven by the voracious system of plantation agriculture, the demand for slaves was never-ending. According to Emma Hart, "Between 1730 and 1780, more than 40 percent of the South's slaves arrived at Charleston."[33] The scope of the African slave trade was shaped partly by governmental policy. South Carolina periodically made the overseas slave trade illegal or economically unfeasible. Between 1766 and 1768, there was a prohibitive duty on slave imports. There was a complete cessation of the importing of slaves in 1770, and after 1774 there was a hiatus through the end of the Revolution (Table 1.3).[34]

From a modern perspective, we might wonder whether colonial merchants were troubled by the existence of the slave trade. "I abhor Slavery," wrote Henry Laurens, but "in former days there was no combatting the

Table 1.2. Rice Exported from Charleston, in Barrels, 1762–1772

Year	*Total*	*Great Britain*	*Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean Sea*	*Colonies in British North America*	*West Indies*
1762	85,209	39,547	11,014	12,387	22,261
1763	104,394	56,359	14,342	16,194	17,499
1764	101,841	58,930	16,206	7,463	19,244
1766	92,492	45,210	28,251	4,283	14,748
1768	118,910	76,182	30,027		12,701
1769	116,250	61,825	31,755	3,891	18,779
1770	133,314	56,980	34,429	8,574	33,331
1771	126,906	74,297	15,875	9,433	27,301
1772	108,015	74,521	9,708	5,879	17,907

Source: "Rice exported from Charleston, by destination: 1717–1772," in *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Eg 1166–70.

prejudices of Men supported by Interest."[35] On the other hand, Leger & Greenwood told a prospective business partner, "we wou'd [with] the greatest Chearfullness Join you . . . in the Negro way" of business.[36] It is probably safe to say that most merchants who found the slave trade distasteful would not be engaged in business in Charleston, where slavery was the cornerstone of the economy.

One final line of business, finance, must be examined for its importance to postcolonial Charleston. By London standards, Charleston was lacking in financial institutions. Shipping insurance, a necessity for doing business, came from the mother country. There were no banks in Charleston until after the Revolution; instead, loans came from private wealthy individuals. Michael Woods has analyzed the occupations of those involved in litigated debts before the Court of Common Pleas in South Carolina. He found that before the Revolution, "Charleston merchants were the primary source of credit and . . . a small cadre of the merchants generated a disproportionate share of the credit."[37] Like the slave trade, finance was a line of business open primarily to the wealthy.

Charleston's merchants imported the goods necessary to sustain the plantations; they exported the products of the plantations, especially rice

Table 1.3. Number of Slaves Imported to South Carolina from Africa, 1760–1774

Years	*Number of Slaves*
1760–64	10,308
1765–69	13,055
1770–74	21,735

Source: Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry, 1760–1810," 133. Note that statistics on slave importations are currently in flux as population levels are reevaluated.

and indigo. The wealthiest merchants often became slave traders. Unlike their peers in other American ports, Charleston's merchants frequently worked on commission rather than on their own account. This meant that one of the most important things novice merchants learned was customer management.

Building a Reputation and "Networks of Means"

A young merchant's career began with an unusually good education, though not a gentleman's education. Merchants needed to be literate, to write clearly, and to know accounting. (Latin and an acquaintanceship with classical literature were unnecessary.) As Henry Laurens explained about the education of his son, also named Henry, "I am trying to make my Harry a good English Scholar, and a good Arithmetician, because I intend him for some Trade or other, a Merchant, or some ingenious Mechanical Business." Only if Harry "outshoots my Expectation," the elder Laurens continued, "which I by no means suspect," would he "learn Latin, Greek, and Hebrew."[38]

An aspiring merchant would enter another man's shop as an apprentice, where he would have to prove to his master his willingness to work. After about a month in Henry Laurens's shop, young Levi Durand complained "that the confinement was too great & that he did not chuse to undergo or submit to it." When Laurens explained "that no Man had ever made any great progress in Arts & Sciences, not even in that lower branch, Merchandize, but those who had submitted to confinement, to study, & to some few self denials," Durand agreed and returned to his family's plantation.[39] As members of the middle class, merchants valued steady workers. As Benjamin Franklin wrote, "In order to secure my

Credit and Character as a Tradesmen, I took care not only to be in *Reality* Industrious & frugal, but to avoid all *Appearances* of the Contrary."[40]

Reputation was important because business in the eighteenth century ran on personal connections. By our standards, the colonial period was lacking in institutions that supported the middle class. The historian Jerrold Seigel recently argued that the nineteenth century was characterized by the development of increasingly vital "networks of means," or organizations through which actions could be taken at a distance: "1. markets; 2. states and other administrative structures; and 3. webs of information and communication." Access to the first was mediated by money, to the second by "political legitimacy," and to the third by "communicative competence," to use Habermas's term for the technical and rhetorical ability to join a public conversation. Seigel further argues that these networks of means are distinct from personal networks such as those established through ties of family, friendship, ethnicity, or locale, in that they are not naturally limited in size. Networks of means are also distinct from premodern networks, such as the church, in that they do not have an inherent raison d'être.[41]

While it is possible to quibble with Seigel's analysis ("business reputation" seems a better term than "money" for the key that gives access to participating in the market), his work gives us insight into what made the world of Charleston's merchants from the colonial period through the War of 1812 so different from our own. These men lived in a world in which networks of means were still fragile and developing. While newspapers existed, personal letters often provided better information. The federal government seemed far away and often irrelevant. Most of all, international trade typically was based on personal connections.

For example, the London-based merchant William Manning was determined to foster a friendly relationship with Charlestonian Josiah Smith Jr., repeatedly sending small gifts and offering Smith a place to stay in London. "I should in deed esteem it a Very Great pleasure," wrote Smith, "did Providence but [*illegible*] the Way for my Visiting you, were it Even but for Once I would have you to hope that my Hypocondriatick Complaints may One day or Another drive me to seek relief from your Quarter and then I shall Hope for a happy meeting with you & yours." Along with the friendly offer of a room came the promise of a commission: "your Friendship towards me, appears not a Little in Your Second Letter," which offered Smith the opportunity to sell a shipment of slaves.[42] (It is worth noting that Manning's hospitality later led him into difficulties; while staying in Manning's house,

Henry Laurens's eldest son got Manning's daughter pregnant. A hasty marriage followed.)

When young merchants felt they had sufficiently nurtured their business friendships, they began their own businesses. If they moved away from the city where they had trained, they could use their contacts from that city to initiate business. Many young men moved to Charleston from England and relied on their friends in the mother country for business. Similarly, many men engaged in trade in England after beginning their careers in Charleston. Josiah Smith continued to foster his connection with James Poyas after the scandalous behavior of Poyas's wife forced him to return to England.

The typical merchant began his career with "the all-important letters of introduction" as his most valuable asset.[43] Young men learned to seek out patrons and reward them with respect. Hogg & Clayton's letters reflect the responsibilities of novice merchants to the elders who had helped them. One such novice merchant wrote to a man who had found a dry goods supplier for them: "it is the Inclination of every good man to Encourage these Beginners who if they are Fortunate will Suceed them in Generosity of Temper by that means they will Continue to Bless the human Species—these [*illegible*] a great many years after they have gone to Enjoy the Reward of it—I wish I may prove Such a one for the Exercise of yours—"[44] Merchants saw themselves as part of a hierarchy, in which older merchants supported younger ones and were eventually replaced by them. The younger men knew they could never possibly repay their elders; they could only help the men that followed them.

Hogg & Clayton's letterbook demonstrates that merchants—especially young commission merchants, newly entered into business in their own right—tried to write letters that would please prospective customers. Francis Clayton wrote to one correspondent, "we Shall be Extremely glad to Serve you here either in the purchase of our produce procuring freights for vessels you may be Concern'd in or any other Bussines you have to transact in this part of the world." Aside from cheery affability, Clayton promised unusual insight into Charleston's market: "if you Should think fit to Employ us You may always depend on the Earliest notice of any Change in the State of our markets or Whatever we imagin'd would be Conducive to your Interest."[45] Of course, Hogg & Clayton were well aware that a pleasant manner was not enough to promote a long-term business friendship. They wrote, "by our punctuall execution of any other mercantile occurrence, You might Intrust to our Care, we would Endeavour to Convince you how much we are,

Sir/Your very humble Servants."[46] Nevertheless, it is worth noting the tone they thought would engage their new correspondents: clever, eager, and, above all, deferential. The word *servant* punctuates their letters and should be taken seriously as a statement of purpose.

Midcareer merchants had some correspondents whom they always treated as superiors; Henry Laurens always seemed to be metaphorically bowing to James Grant, governor of Florida, as when he wrote Grant, "I am glad to find my resolution meets the approbation of Your Excellency who I know discerns rightly in every thing."[47] However, egalitarian sociability became an increasingly important tool for them, partly replacing the deference they had used in their younger days. Established merchants exchanged pleasantries at the same time that they exchanged market information, frequently sharing news about their families.

In the letters merchants wrote to their peers, we get a deeper sense of how they understood their place in society. Merchants knew that their status was above that of the slaves but somewhere below the highest levels of society. They knew they were members of an inchoate group of professional businessmen and their households, though they did not often use the term "middle-class" to describe it. Members of the elite were most aware of the limited nature of the middle-class worldview: lack of classical knowledge, separation from elite realms such as government and the military.[48] But middle-class men believed that what set them apart from other classes was behavior. To be like them, according to the merchants, was to be diligent, restrained, hardworking, and useful.

The character of their work ethic is perhaps best shown in the way they educated their children, a topic that was surprisingly common in business letters. Charleston's merchants believed that children had to be educated to become "useful members of society"—a phrase they themselves commonly used.[49] As Laurens wrote, "My endeavours are more particularly bent upon qualifying my Children to Earn or to possess Estates consistently with the Characters of useful Members of Community than upon the acquisition of large Independent fortunes for them."[50] Having a "large Independent fortune" was a necessary (though not sufficient) characteristic of being a gentleman; even the extremely wealthy Laurens claimed to be keeping his children middle-class.

In practice, being "useful" meant that boys received a professional education and girls were trained in managing a household. "Patsy is forward in her learning," wrote Laurens, "she reads well & begins to write prettily, is not dull in the french Grammar, & plays a little on the Harpsichord, but better than all, she handles her needles in all the useful

branches & some of the most refined parts of Womens work & promises me to learn to make minced Pies & to dress a Beef Steak."[51] Girls who became too enthusiastic about learning were reminded of the limitations on their sex. When Laurens's daughter Polly decided that she would rather be a boy, Laurens thought that "a narrative of the history of Joan of Arc may cure the little Maid's ambition for Breeches."[52] As the historian Margaret Hunt has pointed out, "There is no doubt that in many, perhaps most, middling families, girls were 'loved' just as boys were. It is also clear that girls were a lower priority when it came to distributing family resources, whether of a material or symbolic kind, and that this relative lack impeded them for the rest of their lives."[53] Daughters were supposed to contribute to family well-being by marrying prudently. As Laurens explained when his daughter Martha fell in love with a man he considered a fortune hunter, "If she marries the Man, she marries the family, numerous & poor, these for Generations will all think themselves married to her family."[54]

A less articulated but also deeply felt value was cosmopolitanism. No one expected a merchant to be able to read Latin or turn a witty phrase. He should, however, possess a worldly understanding. Laurens told one of his sons to emulate Sir Andrew Freeport, a character from the *Spectator*. Freeport was "a person of indefatigable industry, strong reason, and great experience," with businesses in every direction.[55] Through diligent labor, merchants expected to obtain a middle-class form of power that came from their specialized knowledge and skills—power over economic growth. Mercantile interest in fostering transoceanic connections explains the otherwise odd practice of educating young children far from where their parents lived, a practice that continued even after the Revolution. Josiah Smith sent his son and his ward to Elizabethtown, New Jersey, for schooling.[56] Harry Laurens sailed to Europe to be educated at the age of eight.[57] Merchants explained that they chose to send their children away because Charleston's schools were no good or because they were concerned about the unhealthiness of Charleston's climate. But these educational choices also reveal that the parents valued cosmopolitan connections. By sending Cashal Fitzsimons to Bordeaux, his father, Christopher, ensured that Cashal was part of an Atlantic community. Cashal would bring his father's friendships to a second generation. "Cashel writes as if perfectly at Home in your House," gloated Christopher to his Bordeaux correspondent.[58] Well informed, energetic, willing to serve, useful, and cosmopolitan: these were the middle-class values colonial merchants most admired.[59]

As Sarah Pearsall has noted, the great geographic spread of the eighteenth-century British Empire, and the empire's dependence on personal rather than institutional connections for its functioning, yielded a uniquely flowery epistolary language testifying to the depth of emotional connection across the miles—an emotional intensity that was not necessarily an indication of behavior or of the way correspondents really felt (if that were possible to determine).[60] Though merchants promised that they prioritized the needs of their trading partners, there are indications that they sometimes cheated them, if they could get away with it. Henry Laurens wrote to one of his overseers in February 1766:

> Corn is become a very scarce article. Therefore I desire you to let me know as speedily as possible exactly how many bushels there are upon the Plantations even if you measure it all out, & dont delay this. If you can buy Corn any where not beyond 12/6 per Bushel I ask you to agree for One Thousand Bushels or as many as you can get & let me know & I will contrive to send the Money for it, but if at a distance you may buy it cheaper. This is a matter that you need not speak of to any body.[61]

The last line indicates that Laurens was trying to collect as much corn as possible without alerting local planters to the spike in its value. When Laurens told a prospective supplier that he needed the corn for one of his plantations, this was the truth but not the whole truth; he was also buying corn for other men, such as James Grant, governor of East Florida.[62] When the planters found out what Laurens was doing, some of them reneged on their contracts to sell corn to him.[63] This was how the game was played. Only a certain level of honesty was required with trading partners, enough to keep them willing to trust you next time. This trait would only become more pronounced in the nineteenth century.[64]

Merchants and Status

To read merchants' letters from Charleston is to be impressed by their willingness to restrict their ambitions, to insist that they were happy to be middle class. But when Josiah Smith told William Manning that he wanted his son to be a useful member of society, or when Hogg & Clayton called themselves willing to serve, was this just empty rhetoric? To consider how middle-class the merchants really were, we must look at the way they treated their slaves, acquired plantations, and engaged in politics.

Parts of South Carolina's class system were fully formed by the late colonial period, while others remained inchoate. Along with the values of diligence, worldly wisdom, and deference that they professed in their letters, merchants shared a sense that their status group was somewhere in the amorphous middle of the social hierarchy. Charles Town's merchants knew who were at the top of the status ladder: the king and the aristocracy, more as a conceptual source of authority and limitation than an actual presence. At the bottom of society were the slaves.

Colonial merchants were generally uninterested in slaves as individuals. Laurens informed his overseer, "I send up a stout young Woman to be a Wife to whome she shall like best amongst the single men. The rest of the Gentlemen shall be served as I have opertunity. Tell them that I do not forget their request."[65] The modern reader might wonder what this woman, whose name was My Lady, felt about the arrangement. Did she want to choose a husband from a group of complete strangers? For Laurens, her personality and selfhood did not matter. He believed that marriage fostered happiness, and therefore his slaves should be married.

For mercantile slaveholders, the fundamental issue was whether their slaves fulfilled their expected role. They manifest a striking disinclination to understand their slaves. John Lewis Gervais told Laurens about a bloody incident between an overseer and a slave at one of Laurens's plantations.

> [The overseer] had missed some Rice out of the Machine house twice, they had opened a barril upon which he made two Negros Watch, being disatisfied with this duty they Grumbled & he found that March the Driver was the thief upon reproving him, March was very Saucy, he then laid hold of him, but the Negro proved to be the Strongest & threw him, & upon his ordering the negros to Seize him, they would not do it__he went home so did March, he saw him pull of his Jacket, & Cut something he thought a Loop, & that he intended to fetch him, but hearing a noise in the negro Yard, he went out__& found that this desperate fellow had Cut off his left hand above the Thumb, & came up to him with a Knife in his right hand__he believes to kill him, but the negros Stop'd him & took the Knife from him.[66]

After being accused of theft and fighting with his overseer, the driver March deliberately cut most of his own left hand off. Why would he have done such a thing?

According to Laurens, there had been a recent change in March's behavior: "he was ever a Man of a placid & obliging disposition & always as far as I knew a good & faithful Servant until he unhappily became connected with Mary."[67] Laurens claimed that since March formed this relationship, he had become a thief. A white carpenter at the plantation had previously whipped March for robbery. Despite Laurens's belief in March's guilt, it is unclear whether March had stolen the rice. His accusers may have been angry with him for something he had done as driver, or they may have just chosen a name at random in order to avoid watching the rice house. March may have maimed himself in anger that the overseer had so little faith in his word. Or he may have been the thief, and he may have maimed himself to protest the punishment he would face for stealing a little rice after working for Laurens for so long. A similar incident at another plantation may give us some insight. A slave whipped for the first time in his life mutilated his hand in a similar manner, saying, "You have mortified me, so I have made myself useless. Now you must maintain me as long as I live."[68]

In any case, Laurens betrayed no interest in the message March might have been trying to send. His concern was how to turn March into a good slave through an appropriate punishment. Laurens's methods of slave reform were standardized and physical in nature and included whipping and being sold off the plantation. March's girlfriend, Mary, would be sent to Georgia and sold. March would either be sent to the workhouse or punished in front of the other slaves; in either case, he would be an example to "the public." Laurens believed that March would "soon" give "proof of humility," "after he is Seperated from that wicked Devil."[69] March's behavior, not his motivations, was what interested Laurens.

However, slaveholding merchants did form emotional attachments to a few select slaves, which allowed them to believe they treated all their slaves well.[70] Merchants cultivated such relationships because they wanted some of their slaves to act as a Greek chorus for the events of their masters' lives. Laurens returned home after a long trip overseas and "found no body here but three of our old Domestics Stepny Exeter & big Hagar, these drew tears from me by their humble & affectionate Salutes & congratulations my Knees were Clasped, my hands kissed my very feet embraced."[71] Laurens wanted his slaves to express the joy and relief that he felt on returning home. Similarly, Sarah Simons reported that when she received a letter from her husband, James, "before I had time to open the letter the whole house and yard was in an uproar of joy, joy, 'we have heard from Pappa, we have heard from Mossa,' every negro ran

in to wish me joy and hear how you were; so much are you prized among us."[72] Other relationships were sexual or romantic in nature. I return to the issue of interracial relationships in later chapters.

Some historians have argued that merchants' ultimate goal was to become planters because planting was inherently of a higher status than trade. The immensely influential George C. Rogers Jr. wrote, "Since the eighteenth-century ideal was the landed gentleman, there was a tendency for retiring merchants to become gentleman-planters."[73] This argument understates the economic reasons for buying land.[74] A merchant's ultimate objective was to earn enough to retire from trade and live off his investments. Perhaps some of the men looked forward to devoting themselves to concerns other than trade: raising their families, becoming involved in politics, or enjoying the arts.[75] They were certainly driven by the lack of social protections for the elderly and infirm. Men who fell into debt could realistically look forward to the contempt of their peers, the strictures of poverty in an era that provided little support for the poor, and even imprisonment.

Merchants feared more than their own impoverishment. Adult men had responsibilities that extended beyond themselves. They saw themselves as members of extended families, with the responsibility to care for the families' weaker members, including women, children, young and elderly men, and men who were not capable of supporting themselves. They believed that to be a man was to be capable of earning money, of being a good provider.[76] Young Robert Wilson even argued with his uncle, James Hamilton, about who had the strongest right and duty to support Wilson's mother and sisters. "To maintain my Mother, and provide for my Sisters—has long been a favorite object of my Ambition," wrote Wilson, "and shoud success so far attend me, there will be no occasion, and indeed I shoud be mortified to see them receive from another, what I possess'd the means of Conferring—"[77]

Because of the financial underdevelopment of colonial Charles Town, retirement usually implied landownership rather than the investment of capital in securities. Thomas M. Doerflinger and Bernard Bailyn, in separate studies, also found evidence that landownership was common among the merchants of Philadelphia and New England.[78] Buying land was a response to a problem faced by merchants contemplating retirement. A mercantile business demanded close attention and could not be inherited. Merchants wanted to invest in a concern that promised the steady, reliable income that would enable them to retire and fund their children's inheritance.[79] Owning a rice or indigo plantation in

South Carolina, Georgia, or (less likely) Florida enabled a Charleston merchant to expect a modest, reliable annual income—or even more. John McCusker and Russell Menard wrote that before the Revolution, in "the Lower South, plantation agriculture, not trade or manufacturing, afforded the best chances for success."[80]

Moreover, merchants who bought land did not typically grow staple crops. As Hart has recently discovered, tradesmen (including merchants) who owned plantations were far more likely to be "truck farmers." According to her calculations, 61 percent of tradesmen's plantations were described as suitable for cattle, compared to 26 percent of all plantations. Tradesman's plantations were slightly more likely to be growing provisions and more likely to be harvested for lumber. On the other hand, only 26 percent of tradesmen's plantations were suitable for rice growing, as opposed to 69 percent of all plantations. Seventy percent of tradesmen's plantations were within thirty miles of town.[81]

The British ideal of the landed gentleman was still alive. In the late eighteenth century, some elite planters tried to turn their plantations closest to Charleston into "rural retreats," adding charming cottage houses in neat gardens or giving them an appropriately genteel name, like Drayton Hall, as opposed to the Ratt-Trap. Alicia Hopton used sketches of Alexander Pope's "Sweet Retreat" to remodel her family's Starve Gut Plantation.[82] But even if these merchants successfully cultivated genteel plantations, owning land in America did not have the same cultural weight as owning land in the mother country. When successful merchants-turned-planters visited London, they found themselves categorized alongside the nouveau riche West India nabobs: obscenely wealthy but tasteless (in a society where good taste was a source of cultural power) and lacking in gentility due to having been raised among slaves.[83] Max Edelson has even suggested that South Carolina planters gained social prestige in the British world by imitating merchants.[84] It is my sense that historians have generally overstated the extent to which colonial Charleston's merchants aspired to be considered part of the landed gentry on the basis of the potency of the image of the plantation owner for a later generation. South Carolina planters' disdain for Charleston merchants was a product of a later period, as I discuss in chapter 5.

And yet there were signs that as merchants gained in wealth, they aspired to greater power, especially in the world of politics. As useful, cosmopolitan experts in the world of trade and as successful men in their own right, merchants pursued influence within the empire. In South

Carolina, some merchants attained great political power. In general, politics was reserved for wealthy (and therefore "independent") individuals, and about 10 percent of the wealthiest individuals in colonial South Carolina were merchants.[85] Especially in Charleston, merchants dominated local political offices, such as parish offices and commissions responsible for maintaining civic infrastructure and institutions. Their numbers in the Assembly were disproportionately high (about 20 percent in 1721–75, compared to about 65 percent planters), and they engrossed the most powerful positions for themselves.[86]

Merchants also had influence back in the mother country. Before the American Revolution, Charleston's merchants believed that they had rights as British subjects, especially on issues having to do with trade. They wrote to their correspondents about politics, urging actions to benefit South Carolina. These letters reveal an assumption that merchants were men who deserved to have a political say, at least in the appropriate sphere.

In one example, a customs collector named Daniel Moore was posted to Charleston in 1767. After charging several unjust duties to local individuals, Moore capped his performance by seizing two of Henry Laurens's schooners for shipping lumber without a bond, even though the lumber was only intended as ballast. On the brink of being sued, Moore fled to England. A group of merchants began to lobby their connections in London to prevent Moore from returning. They hired an agent in London and published a pamphlet about Moore titled "A Representation of Facts." This pamphlet was sent to their agent, and Laurens (and probably other merchants) mailed copies to his friends. Laurens sent one copy to Ross & Mill in London, to be picked up at the Carolina Coffee House.[87] One of the advantages of sending the pamphlet there is that it would be readily accessible to other men in the Carolina trade. He also informed friends in America about the skirmish with Moore.[88] Moore was dismissed from his post in 1769.[89]

The Charleston Chamber of Commerce, which included several influential merchants, claimed in a 1773 pamphlet, "The Grandeur, Strength, and Opulence of Great-Britain, her Improvement in Knowledge and the Polite Arts, and the present flourishing Condition of her Colonies, are peculiarly indebted to [Commerce]."[90] Such encomiums to the benefits of trade were commonplaces of the eighteenth century. Men of the period believed that international trade brought civilization to the countries engaged in it. Given the Chamber of Commerce's genesis in the controversy over the East India Company's monopoly on the tea trade, however,

we should note the implicit threat in this innocuous statement:[91] all the improvements trade had brought to both the mother country and her colonies could easily be lost if trade were constrained by disputes. Laurens made a similar point to his British correspondents, more bluntly: "the Losses . . . which apparently happen to Americans will, must eventually from one Cause or other, fall upon the British Merchant."[92]

The mercantile role in politics can be seen as a symptom of the rising power of the eighteenth-century British middle class. As the historian T. A. Milford has explained, "The early eighteenth century saw the British middle classes beginning to demand a level of respect commensurate with their economic weight." To contemporary defenders of the middle class, "merchants were the most valuable subjects. They had accomplished what the sword and the gun had not yet done[,] . . . the steady extension of British authority."[93]

Nevertheless, as men of the middle class, Charleston's merchants were always reminded of the limits on their power and their worth. They understood that some people were more valuable than others. A white middle-class woman's role was to run the home and produce children, and if she had other skills, she was to display them in private society. An African man could be bought and sold according to the whims of his master. But these were only extreme examples of a society that, though probably more open than nations in Europe, was deeply concerned about status.

The restrictions on mercantile power are perhaps best seen in the career of Henry Laurens. As Gordon Wood wrote, "We will never comprehend the distinctiveness of that premodern world until we appreciate the extent to which many ordinary people still accepted their own lowliness."[94] Though much of the lower sort felt no such thing, this is an accurate description of the way Laurens engaged with aristocrats and powerful government figures. He warned his son John not to be extravagant among elite friends: "Great Men, however they may Indulge them Selves, Love & Esteem those among the inferior Classes, who confine their manners within proper bounds. A word to the Wise."[95] When appointed to the Royal Council, Laurens rejected the post with horrified modesty. The sort of men needed, Laurens explained, were those "conversant with the Laws of the Realm, familiar with those of this Coloney, experienced in affairs of Government in general & the particular constitution of this, cool, sedate, wise, capable of giving wholesome Advice to the King's Representative."[96] Not men like him! Laurens's alarmed backpedaling seems especially ironic given his career during the Revolution: president of the Second Continental Congress. But his conduct before

the war was steeped in the knowledge that he could never be a member of the British elite. It was difficult for Charleston's colonial merchants to imagine that they could have power without gentility.

Middle-class merchants were very aware of the line between themselves and the aristocracy, and the even sharper line between themselves and slaves, but typically seemed less focused on the class divisions between themselves and other whites. This was not because they were the only middling sorts in town; Charleston in the mid-1760s had about 170 overseas merchants and more than twice as many skilled tradesmen and women.[97] The men we now call middle class did not see themselves primarily as part of a triad of classes. Other divisions, such as ethnicity, religion, and race, seemed equally important. From an external perspective, however, it is clear that ideas about class restricted what they thought was possible.

Conclusion

Before the Revolution, Charleston's merchants supported their colony's plantation-based economy by exporting rice and indigo, importing manufactured goods, and trading in slaves. Their letters to trading partners nurtured personal relationships and emphasized their desire to serve and to be useful. Their letters reveal as well the development of colonial middle-class values such as diligence, deference, and cosmopolitanism. The real-world behavior of these merchants does not challenge the modesty of their goals, with one exception: their growing interest in political power. In the course of the Revolution, it became increasingly possible for merchants to be both middle class and politically engaged.

2 / The Revolution, John Wilkes, and Middle-Class Mob Rule

At midnight on October 23, 1765, Henry Laurens was startled by a wild pounding at his door—a mob of men, their identities disguised with costumes and masks, demanding to search his house for stamped paper. Laurens showed them his heavily pregnant wife, Eleanor, "shreiking & wringing her hands," but this failed to turn back the mob. Knowing that the door was about to break, Laurens opened it and found himself challenged by "a brace of Cutlasses across [his] breast." The armed gang searched his house and then attempted to make Laurens swear an oath that he knew nothing about the location of the stamped paper. He repeatedly refused, finally pleading, "Gentlemen I am in your power, you are very strong & may if you please Barbicue me. I can but die. But you nor all the Mobs in Carolina shall not by any force or means whatsoever compel me to renounce my friendships or to speak ill of Men that I think well of or to say or do a mean thing." This demonstration of personal honor, proof that Laurens "stood firm and would not be frighted into any meanesses," finally won the men over, and after giving him three cheers, the mob left Laurens and his panicked wife alone.[1]

From the perspective of more than two hundred years, it is easy to minimize the terror of the American Revolution. But Eleanor Laurens apparently believed that she might finish this midnight invasion as a widow. Extramilitary violence was a common result of the disintegration of the traditional relationship between South Carolina and the mother country. This incident reflects two equally logical ways that Charleston's

merchants interpreted the American Revolution—as a move toward the political recognition of the de facto power of certain middle-class individuals or as the harbinger of mob violence and chaos. Whether Patriot or Loyalist, Charleston's merchants needed to maintain their economic networks in an era that profoundly disagreed about the political role of the middle class.

John Wilkes and South Carolina

In many ways, the Revolution in South Carolina can be blamed on a man who never visited the place, John Wilkes. Like many British middle-class families, the Wilkes family selected their most promising son to receive additional education and to become a gentleman, a member of non-noble but polite society: "to speak the English of a gentleman, to be a scholar and a man of leisure, to wear a wig and to carry a sword."[2] Wilkes grew up to be a writer and newspaper publisher whose willingness to go to prison for his political beliefs made him a powerful advocate for the rights of middling Britons. He made himself particularly notable with his newspaper, the *North Briton*, which lobbied for freedom of the press and the rule of law above autocratic monarchical privilege. He sought to end the ministry of Lord Bute, who had been the king's regent; trading on Bute's Scottish background, Wilkes often appealed to anti-Scots prejudice, implying that corrupt Scots were working behind the scenes to bring about a restoration of the Stuart monarchy. In *North Briton* no. 45, published in April 1763, Wilkes wrote that when the English people were oppressed, "justifiable resistance" was "warranted by the *spirit of the English constitution*." He was charged with treason.[3] Middling British men took him up as a political hero, celebrating his political touchstones with feasts in their clubs, purchasing items that displayed Wilkes's special number, 45, such as "a Wilkite wig that had 45 curls," and mobbing the streets of London to support "Wilkes and Liberty."[4]

Wilkes himself often seemed overwhelmed by the forces he had unleashed. In one case, he had willingly allowed himself to be arrested when a mob captured his carriage and took him to a tavern. Wilkes was forced to wait for the crowds to disperse in order to turn himself in.[5] In the end, Wilkes's greatest importance was as a political symbol, not as an individual. Especially in the cities, the British political situation had become increasingly unstable, as middle-class men, growing in economic power, found themselves excluded by birth from all but the most trivial political offices. But through Wilkes the middle classes of Britain

learned that the leadership of the elite rested on the habit of deference and the threat of force and that they were capable of choosing their own leaders and matching any force their government could muster.[6]

In South Carolina, Wilkes found an impassioned follower in merchant turned land developer and wharf owner, Christopher Gadsden. Like Wilkes, Gadsden believed in the inherent rights of Englishmen—even if they happened to live in America—and thought he was fighting the corrupt British-appointed officials who were taking those rights away. Gadsden's admiration for Wilkes caused him to name a street in his development after Wilkes and the entire development Middlesex, for the county Wilkes was repeatedly and fruitlessly elected to represent in Parliament.[7] From Wilkes, Gadsden also learned to see the "cunning, Jacobitical, Butean rascals" that surrounded him. "Dear *Charley* [Bonnie Prince Charlie] is THEIR object," Gadsden explained. "General confusion and uneasiness under oppressive, unconstitutional measures, can alone give Him any chance."[8] An ardent polemicist, Gadsden's positions found currency among the radical, prosperous mechanics who were the first drivers of rebellion in Charleston, and who were also fans of Wilkes. The John Wilkes Club, which had a mostly artisanal membership, supported Gadsden for the South Carolina Assembly in a 1768 rally that featured a march led by forty-five men to a dinner at which "45 bowls of punch" and "45 bottles of wine" were drunk.[9]

But Wilkes shaped the political fortunes of men much less radical than Gadsden. The strongest sign of the influence Wilkes had in Charleston was the crisis over the Wilkes Fund. In late 1769, the Assembly decided to send £1,500 to Wilkes's lawyers. This displeased King George III, and the situation devolved into a dispute over the relative power of the governor, the Council, and the locally elected Assembly. Several years of bungling attempts to force the Assembly to recant followed, most hamfistedly when a governor dissolved the body and forced the newly elected Assembly to meet in Beaufort rather than Charleston, hoping to leave the Charleston radicals behind. Instead, he met an angry group that had been forced to travel seventy-five miles out of its way and was in no mood to compromise.

By late 1773, and the controversy over the Tea Act, the elected Assembly was essentially nonfunctional. The only legislative government in South Carolina was extralegal in origin, taking its authority from a series of public meetings. In 1775, these meetings were codified into a statewide group, the Provincial Congress, and a smaller acting group, the Charleston General Committee. The General Committee gained much

of its authority from the forty-five men who composed it, many of whom, like Christopher Gadsden, had been members of the Assembly.[10] As is clear from the anecdote that started this chapter, in the face-to-face culture of colonial America, the authority of an honorable gentleman was powerful.

The other source of Rebel power was the threat and practice of violence. The merchants Peter Leger and William Greenwood made the mistake of importing tea to Charleston in late 1773. They tried to lobby a meeting of the people of the city to let them unload the tea and store it until it could be sent back but were forced to let it go to the Collector for unpaid duties. As a member of the firm wrote, "Nothing woud Suffice butt an absolute Resignation on our side, or be Enemys to our Country and be Subject to the Insults of many Rascally Mobbs Convein'd in the Dark high charged with Liquor to do every act of Violence their Madd Brain cou'd Invent."[11]

Leger and Greenwood were not being irrational. As tensions heated during the 1770s, the General Committee created two new committees to police the sentiment in the town. The Committee of Inspection "was formed . . . to report [the conduct of the people] as occasion might require, to the General Committee, whose directions, they were to obey."[12] To use the information of the Committee of Inspection was the role of the Secret Committee, whose commission was, as John Drayton later said, "nothing more or less, than an unlimited power, in placing the Colony in a posture of defence."[13] Under their authority, men were tarred and feathered for pro-British and anti-Committee language—or, in the vicious Swiftian sarcasm of the era, given "a new suit of Clothes . . . without the assistance of a single taylor." As one victim was paraded through the town, a bag of feathers was tossed on another man's balcony, as the crowd "desired he would take care of it till his turn came."[14] Though the Secret Committee did not initiate all such acts of vengeance, "the first commencement of so ludicrous and disgraceful a punishment" can be laid at their feet, and so can "the lead and tone, which this Secret Committee gave to the public opinion."[15] With our distance from the events of the Revolution and with the reverence that has been instilled in us for the Founding Fathers, it is easy to forget that the experience of contemporaries was far different: chaotic, disorienting, and brutal. Many feared that rejection of hierarchy and the rise of middle-class power led to violence and mob rule. From this perspective, opposition to the Patriot cause, or even the simple desire to distance oneself from the conflict, becomes much more explicable.

The common fear that middle-class politicization led to violence and instability shaped the way that Patriot merchants wrote about the war to their British trading partners. Josiah Smith Jr. treated the American reaction to events in 1774 and 1775 as the mildest possible response to British cruelty, and as a brief interlude in a long-standing relationship. For example, he wrote William Manning in October 1774 that the Non-Importation Agreement and proposed Non-Exportation Agreement would be "the only peaceful means of procuring a deliverance from our Oppressors." He added, "Americans will sooner be led by the Cords of Love and Tenderness of her Friends, than by the most coercive attempts of oppression by her secret & open Enemies." This was the sort of ringing letter intended to be read aloud in Manning's favorite coffeehouse, and it emphasized the moderation of the American course and urged equivalent "Love and Tenderness" from the British. In a world with weak networks of means, Smith had an additional reason to write Manning: to sustain their own friendship. Smith sent Manning some peppers that had been pickled by Mrs. Smith herself, as well as some potatoes "for the Children."[16] By including both the political discussion and the exchange of goods in this letter, Smith suggests that the issues between Britain and America could be resolved as peaceably as the disputes between two merchants. He had threaded the rhetorical needle, but the truth of the matter was that Britons held contradictory beliefs about who should hold power that could not be reconciled by appeals to middle-class bonhomie.

The British response to the Boston Tea Party did much to arouse sentiment in Charleston against the British, but even in 1775 observers believed that the situation could be resolved. Josiah Smith wrote a contact in England that he wished to renew his orders for fabric "soon as you find with certainty that the great Folks on your side will cause a repeal of American Grievances."[17] By 1776, war seemed inevitable. Smith described a town turned into an armed camp:

> Our Bay & Wharves always at this Season of the Year filled wt Commodities for Exportation, now quite bare and deserted, not a Vessell to be seen at any Wharf, the Merchants Stores Shut up, Scarce One family in Ten now appearing in Town, & excepting the Males capable of Bearing Arms, and who by Turns are continually upon Guar[d] both Day and Night, In short business of no kind but in a publick way to be done, but that of Fortifying the Harbour & fitting out of Vessells for Defence[18]

In June, the British attacked Sullivan's Island but were turned back. An invasion two years later proved successful, and Charleston was occupied from May 1780 through December 1782.

The British intention in occupying Charleston was to win back American hearts and minds to the empire. For this reason, they installed a civilian government in Charleston as soon as possible in an attempt to restore order. Unfortunately, the British Board of Police was run by the same self-serving, money-grubbing career administrators who had irritated Americans before the war. Thomas Knox Gordon, for example, hoped for a position as a judge in Ireland and only returned to America after being banished in 1777 because otherwise he would lose his pension. Both he and Sir Egerton Leigh wrote home demanding to be paid more than other members of the Board of Police because they believed their legal expertise made them more valuable.[19]

After the British conquered Charleston, many of Charleston's merchants who had been active in the Patriot cause were forced to leave town. Three batches of prisoners were exiled to St. Augustine, including Smith.[20] There they were mocked by local Loyalists. One night, a drunken band of "Augustine Gentlemen . . . struck up the Tune of Yankey Doodle, some of their attendants holding out Pumkins & throwing an Orange or two at the front of the House." Another Augustinian humorously sent the Patriots pumpkins, which Smith didn't mind, as "they will make a good Garnish to our table."[21] Though Smith and the other prisoners on parole were not allowed to leave a certain area of St. Augustine, and suffered various indignities at the hands of the British, the worst penalty they suffered was a financial one. Smith left his business in the hands of his friend Edward Darrell, but then Darrell was also deported, which meant that a Loyalist cousin became Smith's attorney. After the war, Smith lamented that the financial damages of the Revolution forced him to defer retirement and return to trade.[22]

Smith was comparatively lucky; the British occupation devastated the economic lives of some Patriot merchants. According to Thomas Eveleigh, as a prisoner on parole after the occupation of Charleston he was not allowed to engage in trade. Despite his real estate holdings, he was unable to raise money to pay his debts.[23] He was unwilling to sell his lands for less than their value. By 1782, stuck in Philadelphia with other refugees, he was in a precarious position. Angry that he was haunting the wharves and the post office, waiting for a promised payment that never arrived, Eveleigh wrote to a delinquent debtor.

> I am at present (owing entirely to your kindness) in the height of distress, having been already oblig'd to part with every thing but my Cloths for a mere Song, also my Continental Money & what few Loan Office Certificates I had by me for 1/4th their real value & have not 10 Dollrs. by me, & what makes the Matter still worse, my Cousin who has been waiting some time for me (expecting I should receive a Supply from you, according to your Promise) setts off to morrow for the So. Ward & I have been oblig'd to take Lodgings into wh. my Family mov'd this Day & how I shall pay for them or even maintain myself God only knows, my Cousin not having it in his Power to leave me a single Dollar.[24]

Trapped in a strange city, deeply in debt, Eveleigh pleaded with his debtor to let him know whether he was ever to be paid.

Loyalist merchants rejoiced in the return of British rule. William Ancrum, on hearing the news of the capitulation of Charleston to the British, immediately wrote to a British firm in an attempt to renew commercial correspondence.[25] Replacing American prisoners on parole, British merchants came to Charleston.[26] As one of them, Samuel Carne, reported, "Adventurers from all parts but cheifly from Scotland and Scotch Houses in London have entirely engrossed the Trade and filled the place with more Goods then three such Coops as the present would pay for. How You I or any of our Merchantile friends are to be paid is at present to me a Mystery."[27] What sort of goods were imported is suggested in the letterbook of Nathaniel Mills and John Hicks, who were printers as well as merchants. In addition to the paper products, items of personal apparel, and hygiene and beauty supplies that would be in demand in any town, Mills and Hicks imported goods that would appeal to young soldiers: song books, packs of cards, a cheap edition of "the newest plays," and "4 doz small boxes Keysers Pills, for eradicating Venerl: Diseases."[28]

Those who were permitted to remain in occupied Charleston found it an unpleasant place to live and do business. The Board of Police complained that "there were, in several parts of the Town, heaps of dirt and Rubbish, which were become perfect Nuisances." The Commissioners of the Streets (several of whom were merchants) asserted that "the principal reason of the Streets being in such a filthy condition was owing to the total disregard of the Soldiery, both British and Hessian, in their Quarters, in complying with the Regulations directed by the Law to keep the Streets in proper order, and that it was very disagreeable for them to

interfere with the Soldiery, because, in Instances where they had done so, they were treated not only with slight, but insult." Disorder at the city market was also due to the unruly soldiers: "[A]ll Articles whatever which were brought to Market were forestalled by Soldiers, both British and Hessian, who afterwards sold them at the present exorbitant prices, and that they frequently took them from the Country People, paying them what Consideration they thought proper, which deterred the Planters from bringing their Stock to Charles-Town."[29] Despite British optimism, it seemed unlikely that business could return to normal in a military camp.

Economic Effects of the Revolution

As men of business, merchants' experience of the war was shaped by its economic effects. Business in Charleston does not seem to have been much dampened by the coming of the Revolution until the Non-Importation Agreement beginning on February 1, 1775. Rejecting tea was easy enough; Smith wrote a friend in Philadelphia, "don't forget at same time to furnish me with a Box of Donnell's best Chocolate 25 ^{w} for you must know that *Tea* is now abolished from my Family."[30] The 1775 Non-Importation Agreement promoted a scarcity of goods less easy to replace, especially "Negro cloth," the cheap fabric used to clothe slaves. Smith, Ancrum, and Laurens, who either owned plantations or managed them, had to scramble for alternate sources of fabric. Ancrum, for example, smuggled blankets and cloth from Dutch-owned St. Eustatius.[31] By 1777, the dire effects of revolution had become apparent.

Two sets of statistics are available to help us understand what happened to South Carolina during the Revolution: estimates of the value of the paper money between 1777 and 1780, calculated by a committee created by the British Board of Police, and trade statistics collected by the British before, after, and during the occupation. South Carolina had issued paper money since the beginning of the eighteenth century. During the colonial period, this money traded at a relatively stable level, depreciated from the British pound, though Carolinians were short on both paper money and specie when the war started. Nevertheless, according to contemporary observers, South Carolina's paper currency was little depreciated and Continentals were rare until the beginning of 1777.[32]

The South Carolina Assembly attempted to finance the war by issuing more and more paper money, with disastrous results. According to

one analyst, about £8 million in South Carolina's paper money circulated at the end of the war, compared to about £500,000 in 1775.[33] (Continentals also traded as currency, despite concerns that they were being counterfeited.)[34] After 1777, depreciation became a frightening issue for Carolinians, affecting the price of specie, land, and goods. Depreciation continued after the British occupied Charleston.[35]

In 1780, the Board of Police therefore asked a committee of men, many of whom were Loyalist merchants, to set the devaluation of South Carolina's paper currency. This was an unusual request; though an Italian scholar had earlier calculated a price index, the "first documented case of formal price indexation" also happened in 1780, in Massachusetts, which was fighting its own issues of depreciation. The Patriot Massachusetts legislature pegged militia pay to "the then current Money of the State, in a greater or lesser Sum, according as Five Bushels of Corn, Sixty-eight Pounds and four-seventh Parts of a Pound of Beef, Ten Pounds of Sheeps Wool, and Sixteen Pounds of Sole Leather shall then cost, more or less than One Hundred and Thirty Pounds of Current Money." The legislature required agents in the countryside to collect current prices.[36] It is not clear why the legislature used the price of commodities rather than gold or silver as the standard. In an earlier case, the legislature had felt that the price of specie was vulnerable to speculation. Alternatively, the legislature might have felt that the soaring price of commodities was the primary issue facing soldiers and their families.[37]

The work of the Carolinian committee was more sophisticated, more biased toward Charleston, and more oriented to reviving trade than protecting consumers. As the intendant of the Board of Police explained, the core problem was that "Debtors took . . . advantage" of the depreciated paper money "by discharging their Bonds and other pecuniary Securities, made and entered into for Gold and Silver or the lawful Currency of the Province, in the said Paper Bills to the great Injury of these Creditors who were thereby defrauded of their produce." The Board of Police was also concerned about resolving contracts entered into while the bills were depreciating without men resorting to "Litigations and Contentions."[38] Unlike their contemporaries in Massachusetts, the main concern of the Board of Police was not that the value of the consumer dollar was dropping; it was that distrust of the paper currency had the potential to tie up the courts and bring trade to a standstill.

The committee estimated depreciation in two ways: against the price of specie and against the prices of a list of commonly sold "country produce" (Table 2.1; Graph 2.1) This list, which included rice, indigo,

tobacco, flour, butter, tallow, cattle, calves, sheep, hogs, corn, and firewood, was measured in the standard mercantile measures; there was no attempt to estimate household consumption levels of any of these goods. However, we should not expect them to have done so, because such efforts did not come to fruition for another hundred years.[39] In addition, the commissioners were more concerned about the sale of such goods than their consumption. As the commissioners explained, "On the Idea that as it is conceived the Planting Interest will be principally affected by our labours, no reasonable argument could possibly be urged by any Person against the payment of his debts, by the same Rule of proportion that he sold the produce of his Estate."[40] Statistics on prices for both specie and produce appear to have come from the account books of merchants located in Charleston. Unlike in Massachusetts, there was no attempt to calculate how prices might have varied statewide, which probably would have been impossible given Patriot influence in the backcountry. From 1777 through September 1778, paper money was depreciated more against produce than it was against specie, making country produce the more valuable investment. In November 1778, the reverse suddenly became true, with country produce becoming a lesser relative value than gold through June 1780.

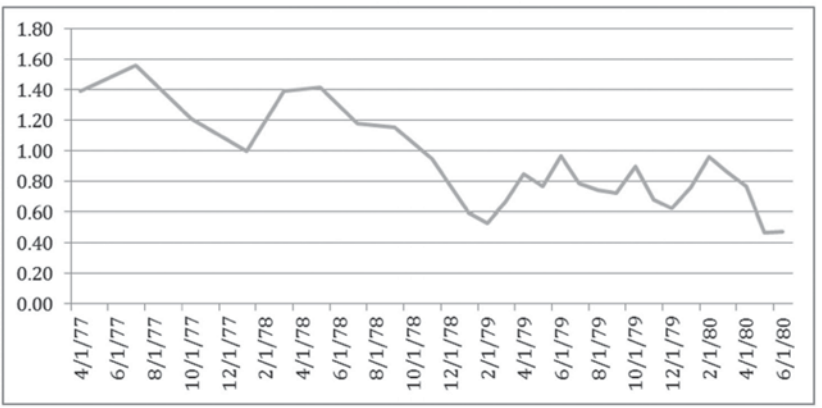
The committee was also interested in calculating the depreciating value of the paper currency against bills of exchange and against imported goods but decided against it. They were concerned that their data on bills of exchange depended on the account books of unusually prosperous merchants and was probably not accurate for less wealthy men. Calculating the fluctuating prices of imported goods also proved difficult, because the goods imported under American rule were of French and German origin and thus not easily comparable to British goods. When they made an attempt to calculate the depreciation for January 1780, they found "the depreciation amounted to 121 for one[,] . . . a quadruple proportion to the amount of the Depreciation by Specie and the Country Produce." They therefore abandoned the project, refusing to let the devaluation calendar encompass "all the effects of the most abandoned and criminal avarice of Speculators and Monopolizers, some of whom from the greatest obscurity became men of Fortune, by a single Adventure." Their table of devaluation was intended to be as balanced as possible for "all Ranks and Orders of Men in the Community, in such times of general difficulty and distress."[41] However, the disproportionate value they found for imported goods does explain import levels during the British occupation, as discussed later.

Table 2.1. Depreciation of Paper Currency

Date of Each Period	*Depreciation by the Value of Specie, in Percent*	*Depreciation by the Value of Produce, in Percent*	*Ratio, Produce/ Specie*
1-Apr-77	113 3/10	157 6/10	1.39
1-Jul-77	127 2/10	198 8/10	1.56
1-Oct-77	176 5/10	214 3/10	1.21
1-Jan-78	287 5/10	287 6/10	1.00
1-Mar-78	337 5/10	470 8/10	1.39
1-May-78	440	622 6/10	1.42
1-Jul-78	483 3/10	569 7/10	1.18
1-Sep-78	500	577 5/10	1.16
1-Nov-78	563 6/10	533 5/10	0.95
1-Jan-79	1000	596 6/10	0.60
1-Feb-79	1250	661	0.53
1-Mar-79	1350	897 4/10	0.66
1-Apr-79	1400	1191 4/10	0.85
1-May-79	1450	1116 4/10	0.77
1-Jun-79	1350	1303 4/10	0.97
1-Jul-79	1720	1355 2/10	0.79
1-Aug-79	2085 7/10	1551 1/10	0.74
1-Sep-79	2340	1691 8/10	0.72
1-Oct-79	2100	1885 6/10	0.90
1-Nov-79	2911 1/10	1983 3/10	0.68
1-Dec-79	3485 7/10	2174 5/10	0.62
1-Jan-80	3833 3/10	2923 4/10	0.76
1-Feb-80	4457 1/10	4291 7/10	0.96
1-Mar-80	5240	4525	0.86
1-Apr-80	6583 3/10	5065	0.77
1-May-80	11000	5170 2/10	0.47
1-Jun-80	11000	5229 4/10	0.48

Source: "Board of Police: Evidence Laid Before the Commissioner for Ascertaining the Depreciation of Paper Currency," PRO C.O 5/513, on microfilm at SCDAH. With the exception of the "Ratio" column (which I added), column headings are taken from the original source. Each "Depreciation" column shows the number of SC paper pounds that would buy what was worth £100 in either British or SC currency in 1777.

Graph 2.1. Ratio of Depreciation of Paper Currency against Produce to Depreciation of Paper Currency against Specie



From Table 2.1. Calculated by author.

The committee did not even consider tracking changes in the value of land, which seems to have dropped against specie, even though, like country produce, it was becoming increasingly valuable in paper currency. The demands of the war, or the illusory rise in land values due to the devaluating paper currency, drove many people to sell family property. As the historian David Ramsay has explained, "Many opulent persons, of ancient families, were ruined by selling paternal estates for a depreciating paper currency, which, in a few weeks, would not replace half the real property in exchange for which it was obtained."[42]

The declining paper currency ironically triggered deeper investment in the state. Josiah Smith Jr. was "almost the first to cast his fortune into [South Carolina's] treasury."[43] While presumably inspired by patriotism, Smith explained at the time that there were few other safe ways to handle money owed to a client. Debtors were allowed to pay in depreciated currency, which made investing the money in new loans, even with safe debtors, an unappealing prospect. Depreciating paper currency inflated the prices of other methods of repayment, such as hard money, bills of exchange, and produce. "What could we do with our depreciated Paper, than to place it on loan in said Treasury where we had the whole landed Interest of the State for our security & a regular payment of Interest as it became due?" Smith asked rhetorically.[44] Merchants could become holders of government securities because of their patriotism, or because they had few other options.

The commissioners finished their work at the end of December 1780. It is difficult to ascertain the level of influence their calculations had. In general, the state of trade was better in 1781 than it had been the previous year, but it did not return to the export-driven economy that had existed before the Revolution. The value of goods exported from the Carolinas to England and Wales dropped from £432,302 in 1774 and £579,549 in 1775 to £13,668 in 1776 and a shocking £708 in 1780, the first year of the occupation. Though that number revived to £94,368 in 1781, by 1782 it had dipped back to £14,182.[45] During the same years, exports from South Carolina to Scotland were zero in 1774, zero in 1775, zero in 1776, £1,221 in 1780, £11,057 in 1781, and zero in 1782.[46] As these numbers reveal, the occupation was not able to revive the export trade. A previously unknown set of records at the National Archives of the United Kingdom clarifies exports for part of 1780 and 1781 (Table 2.2).

During 1781, 5,663.5 barrels of rice were exported to Great Britain and Ireland. This was 8 percent of the 74,521 barrels exported in 1772.[47] In 1772, 5,723 barrels of tar, 4,125 barrels of pitch, and 864 barrels of turpentine had been exported,[48] making the 1781 levels of 583, 230, and 2,482 barrels 10 percent, 6 percent, and 287 percent, respectively, what they had been nine years earlier. Except for the unusual case of turpentine, exports of naval stores and rice to Great Britain and Ireland were equally affected by the war. Though records were made of exports to the West Indies and "the Bahama & Summer Islands," they are unfortunately incomplete. For the first quarter of 1781 ending on February 28, 2,094 barrels and 77 half-barrels of rice, 686 barrels of tar, none of pitch, and 81 barrels of turpentine were shipped to the aforementioned islands.[49]

On the other hand, import levels reveal high pent-up demand, after several years of embargos and nonimportation. Import levels to the Carolinas from England and Wales were £378,116 in 1774, £6,245 in 1775, and zero thereafter until 1780, the first year of occupation, when £236,941 of goods were imported, and a prewar normal £330,847 the following year. By 1782, imports had dropped to a dispiriting £69,743.[50] From Scotland, imports to South Carolina were £5,859 in 1774, £140 in 1775, and zero until 1780 and 1781, when £69,519 and £46,349 were imported, respectively. This represented a much higher level of imports from Scotland than normal; since 1740, more than £20,000 worth of goods had never been imported in a single year before. The level of imports dropped again to zero in 1782.[51] Both of Samuel Carne's assertions, quoted above, seem to have been correct; during the occupation merchants in Charleston

Table 2.2 .Exports from Charleston, 1780–1781

Quarter Ending	*Rice, bbs*	*Rice, 1/2 bbs*	*Deer Skins, Hhds*	*Deer Skins, bundles*	*Indico, bbs.*	*Indico, wt of do.*	*Indico, Cask*	*Tar*	*Pitch*	*Turpen-tine*	*Staves*	*Tobacco, hhds*	*Tobacco, ?*
8/26/1780	312	62											
11/26/1780	4,365	491	4		689			97	216	1139	1500	777	1
2/26/1781	2,005	70	4	34			291	10		713		886	
5/26/1781	3,453	341	3	31			777	317	106	360		562	
8/26/1781					12			30	40	36		57	
11/26/1781							335	226	84	1373		158	
1781 totals	5,458	411	7	65	12	0	1,403	583	230	2,482	0	1,663	0

Source: Several sheets beginning, "An Account of the Exports from the Port of Charleston to Great Britain and Ireland in the Quarter Beginning. . . ." Prize lists and accounts of exports and imports at Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Florida. Returns and correspondence relating to Brigadier General (Oliver) de Lancey's Brigade of American and of other Loyalist regiments: America, C 106 / 87 PT1, National Archives, Kew, UK. Arithmetic corrected from original.

appear to have been primarily engaged in the import trade, and Scottish merchants formed a new and notable cadre of traders working in occupied Charleston.

In general, during the war years, people who relied on a steady income from investments suffered, while those engaged in the import trade might prosper. Contemporary merchants found the shifts in political, social, and economic power that the war triggered deeply disturbing. As Patriot merchant Josiah Smith wrote to a friend two years before the occupation:

> you wou'd be surprised (were you now here) to see what transitions have taken place among us, numbers of People, besides Israelites, that were but low in the beginning of our troubles, having become bold adventurers in buying & selling, are now possessed of large property, whilst others that formerly lived Comfortably by House Rents & Interest Money &Ca hav[e] been obliged to break into their Principal Sums for necessary Subsistance.[52]

This sense that the world had gone topsy-turvy continued after the British recaptured Charleston. Returned British merchant Samuel Carne complained:

> Men who came cringingly & humbly begging me in England for that Credit, which their own Countrymen had refused them and others whom I raised from nothing whilst a resident here, are barely civil, distant & insolently proud. Puffed up with yr present run of good luck, They totally forget that my Credulity even to my ruin, first made them of any Consequence.

In short, "many small Men are become as suddenly great & consequential as when ye Rebels bore sway," but Carne contented himself by muttering that the "New Adventurers" should dread the "future Winding up."[53]

This anger and confusion stemmed from the fact that not only had great men fallen and small men risen—always a fact of life in the mercantile way—but the rules of the game seemed to have changed. Conservative economic behavior, like holding on to cash rather than recklessly spending it on land and commodities at high nominal prices had disastrous results. As David Ramsay commented, "Prudence ceased to be a virtue, and rashness usurped its place." The fundamental tenets of middle-class behavior seemed to have been set aside.[54]

Furthermore, the wrong people, by eighteenth-century lights, seemed to be succeeding. Importing dry goods had always been the business of

marginal young men; prosperous merchants exported country produce such as rice and indigo. But the value of imported goods was increasing so wildly that contemporary analysts refused to believe it, while the value of country produce was not keeping up with the price of specie. This change in value can be seen in the relatively low export and high import levels, though of course import levels dropped once it became clear that people in South Carolina had no means to pay. But for a brief time importers rather than exporters were the ones making money in Charleston.

Carne commented that the merchants who worked in Charleston during the occupation were primarily and disproportionately Scots.[55] This is supported by statistics from the city directory. The first year for which a Charleston city directory exists is 1782, the final year of the occupation. Of the 135 men listed as merchants, 49, or 36 percent, had Scottish surnames. In the postwar 1790 directory, 199 men were listed as merchants (14 percent of whom had been listed in 1782), 33, or 17 percent, with Scottish surnames. The proportion of Scottish-surnamed merchants working in Charleston would not rise above 25 percent again until the War of 1812.[56] Of course, Wilkesian anti-Scots rhetoric helped poison local sentiment against these men. Josiah Smith also commented pejoratively on the number of Jews becoming unexpectedly successful in Revolutionary Charleston, though this percentage is more difficult to calculate using surnames.[57]

By late 1781, the defeat of Lord Cornwallis made the political future of Charleston increasingly uncertain. As the Loyalist merchant John Hicks wrote to a friend, "every matter seems to go against us, no merry meetings, no Duelling, and many find very little or no Business, nothing to divert the mind from Gloomy Ideas and distressing Fears, what will be the determination of the Parliament and people of England, on the late defeat of Lord C—s [Cornwallis] we dread yet wish to hear."[58] The Board of Police met less and less frequently in 1782 as their influence became increasingly irrelevant, restricting its legal work to "pressing and immediate necessity."[59] So too did the brief occupation-fueled boost in imports wane in 1782. When the British army left Charleston in 1782, the city's stores were still glutted with unsold goods—an issue that would prove politically important after the war.

But this does not mean that the Patriot merchants were more successful in coping with the economic challenges of the Revolution. Ramsay suggested that many held onto depreciating currency for longer than they should have because they had faith that the Americans would soon

win and redeem it at close to face value. And given the brutality of British attacks on South Carolina, why not turn vulnerable land into safe money? As Ramsay summarized, "The warm friends of America, who never despaired of their country, and who cheerfully risked their fortunes in its support, lost their property; while the timid, who looked forward to the reestablishment of British government, not only saved their former possessions, but often increased them. In the American revolution, for the first time, the friends of the successful party were the losers."[60]

As economic forces trumped political controls, the Board of Police was unable to restore Charleston to the status quo before the war. The instability of the social order during the Revolution—the way the war made it possible for the wrong people to succeed—became for Charleston's merchants a metaphor for the experience of war and a warning of what might happen to the postwar economy. If the Revolution meant that successful middle-class men could earn a place in government, it was disturbing to think that these men would not be sober pillars of the community but rather wartime "Speculators and Monopolizers." The inexplicable success of "small men" and the qualities that made them succeed—their eagerness to engage in short-term speculation rather than their willingness to quietly serve—would continue to haunt Charleston's merchants even after the American victory.

After the War

The war's aftermath was exhaustion and confusion. David Ramsay wrote, "The eight years of war in Carolina were followed by eight years of disorganization, which produced such an amount of civil distress as diminished with some their respect for liberty and independence."[61] The devastation the war had left behind was brutal and South Carolina's ability to revive unclear. In general, civil authority spent less energy punishing the Loyalists than reviving the old trade with Great Britain. At the same time, debtor-protection legislation discouraged many merchants who were trying to do business in Charleston.

Lenience to former Loyalists can be seen in several venues. The historian Kathy Roe Coker traced the careers of forty Loyalist merchants across the state whose property was confiscated by the South Carolina Assembly, in particular, the 1782 Jacksonborough Assembly. This Assembly, which met during the war, was intentionally punitive in the hope of winning converts to the Patriot cause. Of the forty merchants, fourteen

were punished for signing congratulatory addresses to the British and sixteen for serving in political or military posts under the British.

Surprisingly, most of these troubling cases of loyalism received the mercy of postwar Assemblies. Only eleven of the men received no relief; twenty-four lost a percentage of their property, ten of whom were also temporarily restricted from public office; and five were completely exonerated.[62] The argument that swayed the Assembly—the most common argument these merchants made—was that they had allied themselves with the British "to protect their property and mercantile interests."[63] The leniency of the Assembly is further evidence that its main interest was to revive the economy, not punish Loyalists.

A second example of this willingness to welcome merchants of dubious loyalty into the country occurred when the Assembly allowed about fifty British merchants who had arrived during the occupation and wished to clear out their stocks to stay for six months, a period that was later extended. Their presence in Charleston was understandably controversial, especially among the native Charleston merchants. On a strictly economic level, native Carolinians were concerned that these merchants' head start in importing goods would knock them out of the market. Was it fair, they wondered, that their young country's enemies should profit?

The historian Jerome Nadelhaft has pointed out the justice of these concerns. In 1783, £300,000 worth of merchandise was imported to the state, while the British merchants had £500,000 already on hand. The native-born merchants' new imports were overshadowed by the stock in the state. By the following year, British merchants seem to have given up the pretense of cleaning out their stocks. In 1784, Nadelhaft calculated that foreigners imported at least 40 percent of the over £1,000,000 in merchandise that entered the state.[64] It was clear that Carolinians were desperate for the imports they had been unable to receive during the war. "Negro cloth," the heavy cloth intended for the slaves, had been especially scarce.

The end of the war reopened the slave trade, which white South Carolinians urgently wanted, since about a quarter of the slaves in the state had disappeared—either dead, escaped, or taken away by the British.[65] In 1784, Isaac King complained that the newly independent South Carolinians were buying slaves rather than paying back creditors such as him.[66] About ten thousand Africans were brought as slaves to South Carolina between 1783 and 1787.[67] Almost half of them arrived in 1784 alone.[68] If later times of mass slave importation are any indication, the suffering of these people was especially brutal.

But the merchants had neglected to take into account the chaos engendered by the war. Americans were no longer a part of the British system and thus lost their customers in the British West Indies. The value of the indigo crop was dropping without British support. While they were willing to buy on credit, Carolinans could not pay for what they purchased, and many of the debts that had been incurred before the war had lost their value.

The traumas of invasion and exile left their mark on Charleston's merchants. One man regretted that he did not know the exact balance due one of his correspondents, Captain Carman, because the book in which he had kept that account was put into a sloop that was attacked by the British during the siege of Charleston and had therefore been destroyed by British soldiers.[69] Piteous letters traversed the country, telling the stories of unpaid debts owed by men who had died or absconded during the war. The widow of Captain Carman eloquently lamented her straitened situation:

> o hevins Mr Gibbins to think if you have enney Children to have In the first Plase your Self takin from them then to have them Sepperated from their Mother wich Sentinly will be Mines Care if somthing Dont turn up for them very shortly I have Six Poor Littl Fartherless Children that has been raisd So fur with as Good a Prosspect almost as enney amoungst us Can I exspress it yeas I must and with two Much truth from a State of affluance all Most to a State of begare I think I can see you Grately affected if you have enney bowells I you you Must feel for a Poor Creture Surcomstanst as I am Some times I think I Can take wings and fly to Difarent Parts of the world ware Peopel ows Me I think if I Could See them I Could worke on their Pawshens more with My toung then pen as I amt Mistress anofe of that to exspress My Selfin In a Proper Manner Due Sir Let Me learn form [*illegible*] you as Sune as you Posabley Can if you have enney faith in the Prayers of the widdow and fartherless you Shall have them till the Day of your Death.[70]

Men and women who had once thought themselves secure in their debtors found themselves the holders of nothing but paper.

The South Carolina legislature acted several times to protect debtors. As people who were themselves debtors, merchants were helped by these acts; as creditors, they were injured. In 1782, the Jacksonborough Assembly delayed suits for debts. The next year, they delayed suits for debts contracted before February 26, 1782. A law passed the following

year stated that prewar debts could not be fully collected until 1789, and creditors could not sue for interest on the debts until 1785, or any of the principal until 1786.

The law that was perhaps most damaging to creditors was passed in 1785. It stated that before property was sold for debt, it must be appraised, and it could not be sold for less than three-fourths of the appraised value. Creditors had to accept property at three-fourths of its appraised value as payment; if they refused, sued, and won, they would have to accept property at its full appraised value as payment. This law was susceptible to an amazing number of methods of corruption. Of course, the appraisers might not be honest. A backcountry debtor might offer to pay a merchant based in Charleston an assortment of goods that would be more expensive to transport to Charleston than they were worth. Debtors who offered to pay in nearly worthless "pine barrens" became proverbial. Essentially, this bill closed the courts of law. A 1787 installment act said that debts contracted before January 1, 1787, would be paid in three installments, in March 1788, 1789, and 1790. [71]

It became clear to overseas debtors that collecting money from the Americans was going to prove difficult. In 1816 Davison Newman & Co. received the final, discounted payment for debts apparently contracted in 1783. The agent acting for them in Charleston was the son of the man they had originally hired.[72] Part of the problem may have been a disinclination to be paid in land. While overseas merchants had been willing to own land in South Carolina before the war, evidence suggests that after the war they were averse to the idea.[73] Not surprisingly, overseas debtors were frequently angered by the Americans' refusal to pay what they owed. As Isaac King wrote about the 1789 installment act, "your Legislature had better while they are passing such infamous Acts shew themselves openly & pass one cancelling the payment of all Debts, their inclination & dishonesty I know to be equal to it; I intreat that you will not in what concerns me give them the least indulgence for I consider them in a worse light than Highwaymen."[74]

By 1785, the bloom was off the rose for those who wished to send goods to Charleston. According to Nadelhaft, dutied imports (including enslaved people as well as merchandise) dropped from over £1,000,000 in 1784 to about £600,000 in 1785 and less than £400,000 in 1786.[75] Exports were also unusually low in 1785 and 1786. According to the historian Gordon Bjork's estimates, $2,148,000 worth of goods were exported from South Carolina in 1784, $1,892,000 in 1785, and $2,303,000 in 1786.[76] Nathaniel Russell wrote that no one would want to send slaves

to Charleston knowing that they would be paid for in "paper [money] or Pine Trees."[77] McCredie and Hamilton halted their regular orders from a British firm because they were concerned about the amount of their indebtedness.[78] R. C. Nash has argued that this was a national problem and that "by 1785–6 most American importers were massively in debt to Britain."[79]

But many merchants were still optimistic, as can be seen in the case of Alexander Gillon, a Dutch-born local merchant who had served as commodore of the South Carolina State Navy during the Revolution.[80] In late 1783, Gillon converted the Smoaking Society into the Marine Anti-Britannic Society, a group organized to foster the growth of Charleston's trade while stripping it of its British influences.[81] For the members of Gillon's organization, the Assembly's willingness to forgive Loyalists and welcome British traders was incomprehensible and reprehensible. "May the Cruelties and Manufactures of Great Britain be equally despised by every American," toasted one speaker at their annual dinner. The Society imagined a new system of trade, wherein Charleston's merchants no longer imported British manufactures and exported local produce but rather dealt with the best of France, Holland, and Germany.[82] This new economy inspired both Patriot merchants and local mechanics.

Gillon carried the heady dream of vigorous trade free from British influence to a newly reinvigorated chamber of commerce. Though the organization had existed before the war (in fact, Gillon was a prewar participant), it had gone into decline. Gillon was elected the first president of the new Chamber of Commerce in February 1784.[83] It was designed to be a club with a restricted, thoroughly screened membership.[84] In December 1783 and January 1784, the Chamber of Commerce considered admitting merchants who were citizens of allied nations.[85] Seven months later, it resolved that a member could only be "a Citizen who is a resident of this State."[86] The intent had always been to decrease British influence, but barriers to entry for all foreign merchants became more stringent.

Nevertheless, the Chamber of Commerce worked hard to make the business environment in Charleston friendlier for non-British strangers. It encouraged merchants to have their disputes arbitrated by its members rather than sue each other. Such a course was open to men who were neither members nor citizens. Dutch merchants, for example, found assistance from the Chamber of Commerce. In another dispute, a Chamber of Commerce member was encouraged to be generous to a French merchant because "every foreigner will be convinced that strict justice is to be had and administered in this state."[87]

Depressed as the state of business was after the Revolution, Gillon and his peers at the Marine Anti-Britannic Society and the Chamber of Commerce rejected the Assembly's timid approach to reviving trade by welcoming British merchants. Gillon's supporters were optimistic that trade could be broadened beyond its prerevolutionary limits and that Charleston could be more than a port at the outskirts of the British Empire; it could be a trading power that drew the best of Europe to itself.

But Gillon's career also illustrated a second issue left unresolved after the Revolution: the power of the middle class. Leaving the British Empire stripped America of the birthright aristocracy that had always made local exercises of power feel a little like children playing house in their parents' absence. A power vacuum had opened that could not be presumptively filled by prewar elites. As both Patriots and Tories observed, the economic turbulence of the war had thrown poor men to the top and dashed the wealthy into poverty. In such a situation, who should rule? Where should political power come from: virtue? personal connections? ancestry? wealth? Was it more critical to bring stability or foster liberty?

Certain concepts dominated American thought in the postwar era, whether or not they could be fairly applied to what was happening; in many ways, the public sphere continued to restage the prewar debate about whether they were witnessing a justifiable growth in power for talented middle-class gentlemen or the terrifying birth of mob rule. The Marine Anti-Britannic Society rejected aristocracy in favor of "republicanism," by which they meant the rule of men of virtue rather than men of wealth.[88] After the incorporation of Charleston, Gillon and his supporters began to fear that the aristocracy had returned in the person of Richard Hutson, the intendant of Charleston, who some called "Richard the First." A set of murky incidents in July 1784, involving among other things the suppression of a group of sailors parading with a flag, suggested to some Charlestonians that Hutson had become too powerful. On the elite side, many feared a revival of wartime chaos and street violence. During a run for the intendancy against Hutson in September 1784, Gillon was accused of calling forth "the Demon of Anarchy." Equally of concern to Hutson's party was Gillon's career as "Pettifogging Attorn[ey] and necessitous Speculat[or]," or, in other words, his middle-class economic role.[89]

Though Gillon lost the election, the enthusiasm that the Marine Anti-Britannic Society inspired meant that "the middle class was absorbed into active politics" as "mechanics appeared in elected offices, both in the legislature and on the Charleston board of wardens, just as they had

held positions of responsibility in revolutionary institutions."[90] Gillon himself continued to serve in the state legislature and went on to be a U.S. congressman.[91] The Revolution brought a greater political role for the middle class—though whether Gillon's greatest legacy would be this or increased openness to trade outside the British Empire remained to be seen.

Conclusion

Even the most prescient Charlestonian of 1765 could not have predicted what his city would become twenty years later: politically democratized and economically brutalized. Nor had the war resolved all the issues of political power and economic liberty that it had raised. With a weakened paper currency and the burden of outstanding American debt, it was unclear whether Charlestonians would be able to effectively trade outside the British Empire. The increase in middle-class power could be seen as the growth of mob rule.

But a change was coming. In January 1784, Josiah Smith wrote his friend James Poyas that though they had been "ruined by the late Cruel War," "'tis hoped that a few year peace & Success in Trade will bring many into comfortable circumstances."[92] It might have astonished Smith to discover that he was right.

3 / City of Knavery: Trade before the War of 1812

Scholarship on the South Carolina low country has an unfortunate habit of ending soon after the Revolution and resuming after the War of 1812.[1] For this reason, scholars have forgotten one of the major developments of the intermediary two decades: a great boom in Charleston's economy, promoted by financial stability and the growth of international trade. As Ramsay has summarized, after the Constitution was enacted, "public credit was re-animated. . . . Money, in a few years, became plentiful. . . . Trade flourished—agriculture was extended. . . . In a short time public affairs were so much altered for the better, that the fable of the golden age seemed to be realized."[2] Wild economic growth fostered a new local cadre of merchants, whose values and behaviors were very different than those of their colonial predecessors. Ambitious, rootless young men, they practiced a sort of cowboy capitalism that should lead us to question our assumptions about the inherent progressivism, morality, and, above all, niceness of middle-class culture.

Postwar Finance and the Constitution

South Carolina finished the war with debts it could not repay and essentially worthless paper currency. Postwar South Carolina attempted to rectify its finances. First, the state issued a new security called an indent (because of the indented stub that remained when it was cut out of a record book). As Ramsay explained, "The debts growing out of the war were liquidated, and an acknowledgement on the part of the State

of the sum due was given to the creditor in form of an indent." These indents listed the name of the creditor, the service they had performed or the good they had provided, and the amount due. The interest on these debts was issued as a series of securities known as special indents.[3] For a couple of years, the two types of indents circulated as a fairly stable form of currency; by 1785, indents lost only about 13 percent of their value. Four years later, special indents (which could be used to pay taxes) had lost two-thirds of their value, and principal indents had lost 90 percent of their value—a sign that observers were losing faith that the state would be able to pay its debts.[4] "When ye. pub[lic]. faith has been once broke, it creates great diffidence in trusting to it again," commented one critic.[5]

The situation with South Carolina's paper currency was equally dire by the end of the 1780s. New paper money was issued in 1785, which, as one merchant commented, is "our measure of Trade being bad."[6] In May 1786, Charleston's merchants visited the offices of Josiah Smith and his partners to sign a pledge to take the paper money at par. But by September the same year, it was trading at 30 percent of its face value.[7] By 1787, paper money was "worth nothing almost."[8]

A burst of commercial optimism after the war made the situation even worse. British merchants who realized that South Carolinians were desperate to restock their plantations with manufactured goods, and to purchase more slaves, flocked into Charleston. While the Americans were eager to buy, they were not able to pay the debts that they incurred. Crop failures ensured that indebted planters had nothing to give their creditors. Paper money and indents lost value so quickly that merchants were loath to take them as payment. One merchant wrote in 1785 that several stores had closed because of the depreciating paper currency.[9] In the 1780s, in a desperate attempt to save planters from financial ruin and give the economy time to stabilize, a series of debtor-protection acts halted payments to creditors by closing the courts to lawsuits for debt or requiring creditors to take other forms of property as payment.[10] Merchants reacted by curtailing business; import levels dropped from over £1,000,000 in 1784 to below £400,000 in 1786.[11]

By the end of the 1780s, South Carolinians faced a serious credit crisis. But many saw a solution: replace the Articles of Confederation with a new constitution. A new government was necessary to salvage the local economy. As the historian Mark Kaplanoff notes, "The discussion of the Constitution in South Carolina was carried out much more heavily and explicitly in terms of economics than in other states."[12] Federalists argued that the Constitution would bring a new era of financial stability;

Charles Cotesworth Pinckney promised that "in future we shall be free from the apprehensions of paper money" and anticreditor legislation.[13] Another observer claimed, "No more shall the widow, the orphan, and the stranger, become the miserable victims of unjust rulers."[14] In other words, investors (e.g., widows and orphans, who lived off the income from principal) would no longer be hurt by inflation; creditors (who were often merchants and "strangers") would see their debts repaid. No wonder South Carolina's merchants were heavily Federalist.[15]

The Federalists were correct; the Constitution did wonders for South Carolina's financial status. During the 1790s, the number of merchants listed in the city directories climbed steadily from 135 in 1782 to 199 in 1790 and 241 in 1796.[16] With the promise of federal assumption of state debts, the value of indents rose, and investors came from out of state to speculate in South Carolina debt.[17] George Nelson, who had come to Charleston to sell dry goods, wrote a friend in 1791, "I have made more by Indents than I have made by Store Keeping for some time past."[18] In fact, indents were so desirable that they were counterfeited, and one unscrupulous man was hanged for forgery.[19] The market became less heated by 1792, as news spread of overspeculation in the northern states.[20]

The establishment of the new government also gave Charlestonians the ability to invest in federal securities. About 39 percent of the merchants listed in the 1790 city directory and 36 percent in the 1794 directory invested in Treasury securities. By 1796, merchants were turning elsewhere with their money; only 21 percent of the merchants listed in that year's directory purchased Treasury securities.[21]

Paper securities that could be used as money were crucial to the reestablishment of trade. As the postwar years demonstrate, Charleston could not rebuild without a stable currency that merchants would accept as payment for debts. The Constitution, as its promoters had hoped, had revived South Carolina's economy by creating a new entity that investors would believe in—the federal government.

But Charlestonians may also have felt somewhat queasy at the speculation surrounding federal securities. Mr. Beete's *The Man of the Times: or, a Scarcity of Cash* (1797) was received at Charleston's Church Street Theater with "universal applause." The villain of the play is an evil Philadelphia merchant and speculator known as Old Screwpenny, whose actions horrify his upstanding son. For example, Screwpenny buys land from a farmer using his own notes and then releases information that will devalue these notes, so that he can buy them back through an agent for

a steep discount. In one scene, Screwpenny explains to his son Charles how he made part of his fortune from government securities.

[*Screwpenny*] I always watched how affairs went on in congress, and took measures accordingly, for my own emolument.—When the bill passed for the payment of the military notes, I was beforehand, bought 'em up, and gained seventy-five percent in seven days.—This was industry, Charles.

Char. Fatal industry! by which you have rendered yourself the object of contempt and hatred, to the valuable part of mankind.

Screwp. Hatred, contempt!—What care I? I have money; I am safe; let 'em rail, it may be some consolation to them; and d'ye mind, Charles, do as I have done, and you may be the richest man in the United States.[22]

This play reflects contemporary distaste for the men who profited from the assumption of such securities, often to the detriment of the original owners, who had been paid for their services to the wartime government. Though Screwpenny is probably based on one of the Philadelphian moguls, the popularity of this play in Charleston suggests that his shifty dealings sounded familiar to the local audience.

The improvement of the securities market reflected changes at the local level as well. Charlestonians witnessed a dynamic new force in their financial sector—locally based banks, which had never before existed in the state. In 1791, Charleston obtained a branch of the Bank of the United States, partly because local citizens had bought so much stock in it.[23]

A second bank, the Bank of South Carolina, followed the Branch Bank in 1792. The birth of a local banking industry was important to Charleston. Banks improved financial liquidity, ameliorating the currency shortages of the colonial era. Instead of holding onto a bill of exchange until it came due, or trying to find another merchant who would accept it at a discount, merchants could go to a bank and receive bank bills or specie for it.[24] As a contemporary observer explained, "The establishment of banks has completely done away all inconveniences from the want of a circulating medium, an evil that has afflicted Carolina in every preceding period of her history. . . . Since their institution, in ordinary times, every man whose capital and habits of punctuality entitle him to credit can obtain it."[25] With this new baseline of available credit, Charleston's economy was able to grow. A nascent banking system was a sign of developing networks of means—ways of doing business that were not rooted

in personal relationships—though the turbulence of the economy before the War of 1812 obscured this.

Indigo, Rice, and Cotton

Charleston would not have revived without financial stability, but merchants were drawn there because of the produce of South Carolina's plantations. British mercantilist policies restricted the export of rice and indigo, and Charleston's merchants ended the Revolution eager to explore business with the larger world. In this pursuit they were driven not only by economics but also by their patriotism, the commercial freedom that Alexander Gillon and his supporters at the Marine Anti-Britannic Society had lobbied for. Merchants were able to diversify their trading partners because the Napoleonic Wars forced broader changes in European policies and needs. In the period before the War of 1812, Charleston's merchants would exploit global markets for rice but then find themselves increasingly preoccupied with a new crop, cotton.

Nash has pointed out that Europeans typically bought rice when there were crop failures in Europe; it was never the first choice grain but one bought during times of scarcity.[26] Unfortunately for Europe, the Napoleonic Wars, beginning in 1793, made the consumption of rice necessary. Merchants' letters clearly recognized that the value of rice was rising on the basis of the misfortunes of Europe.[27] As Tait Wilson & Co. wrote in 1802, "The prices will be regulated by the Price of Provisions in Europe."[28] Even more directly, J. F. Henning commented, "The renewal of war between England & france has since yesterday raised the price of Rice."[29] Sometimes merchants seemed to take pleasure in the prospect of European privation, as when Lorent, Knipping & Steinmetz wrote, "All our advices from the north of germany leave but very little doubt that the present war there will, if not cause a famine, at least create a great Scarcity and dearth of provision so that it is allmost next to an impossiblity to lose at the present moderate price of 4$."[30]

Statistics exist for the destination of the nation's total rice crop but not for exports from South Carolina alone. Nevertheless, these statistics suggest an increasingly varied destination for rice shipped from Charleston. Though 70 percent of the rice exported from the United States went to Great Britain and its colonies in 1800, this was the destination of only 36 percent in 1811. By 1811, 23 percent went to Spain and the Spanish West Indies, 34 percent to Portugal and Madiera. France and the French West

Indies were less important importers of rice and apparently imported no rice after 1808.[31]

Statistics from the other side of the Atlantic demonstrate that Germany was a significant importer of rice from Charleston. According to the historian Michael North, "With the growing importance of Hamburg's direct trade to Charleston in the 1790s Carolina had become the dominant supplier of Hamburg's rice imports."[32] Hamburg ships shuttling between Hamburg and Charleston doubled in number and tonnage between 1794 and 1797. Joseph Winthrop remarked in 1803, "We have a number of Hamburg, Bremen and Danish ships here," but German traffic declined rapidly after that year.[33] Though Lorent, Knipping & Steinmetz commented in 1807 on "the german Vessel which carry away every Winter a considerable part of our Cropp" of rice, the company appears to have been witnessing the end of this trade.[34] Trade with the German ports was important due to the goods that the ships brought back on the return voyage, as we shall see later.

The exciting novelty in South Carolina agriculture after the Revolution was of course not rice but cotton, the critical staple of the Industrial Revolution. Sea island cotton was first widely cultivated in the low country in the 1780s. After the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, short-staple cotton became the major crop of the backcountry. The profitability of short-staple cotton enabled the backcountry planters to become increasingly like their low country brethren.[35] One observer even claimed that the cultivation of cotton would flip the relationship between planters and merchants: "The planters will speedily acquire handsome fortunes, and vie with the Merchants, who, tho' very numerous, seem to engross the monied capital of the State at present."[36] Before the War of 1812, South Carolina and Georgia were the center of American cotton cultivation. In 1811, 75 percent of the cotton grown in the United States came from those two states, 50 percent from South Carolina alone.[37] By buying cotton in Charleston for shipment overseas or arranging the shipment of cotton on someone else's account, Charleston's merchants helped fund South Carolina's transition to a cotton state.[38]

In the long run, Britain's industrial preeminence and resultant demand for cotton helped tie the former colony back to the mother country. Over 90 percent of all cotton exported from the United States in 1800 went to Great Britain.[39] But in the short run, the political turbulence of the period after 1807 helped foster new international connections for Charleston's merchants. In 1807, the Embargo Act was passed, halting all American shipping. The act was in effect until March 1809, at

which time the Nonintercourse Act stopped all trade with France and Britain. Trade with these countries was reopened in May 1810 and then ended with Britain in March 1811.

The manufacturers of England and, to a lesser extent, France continued to demand raw cotton for their factories, even after these trade restrictions were passed. Charleston's merchants were happy to find new ways to satisfy their needs, regardless of the desires of the men they called the "wiseacres at Washington."[40] Thomas Henry Hindley, a regular mercantile visitor from Great Britain, was about to ship cotton to a British client when he learned of the imminent approach of the embargo. In his eagerness to fulfill the contract, he snuck onto the ship with a pilot before dawn, hoping to set sail unnoticed. However, he reported, "we were not fortunate enough to get . . . over the Bar, before we were boarded by the Revenue Cutter, who fired three shot into us, and I have nearly got into great difficulty for making the attempt to get the vessel out." Untroubled by his close brush with the armed forces of the customhouse, Hindley cheerfully told his clients that he would try to sneak the cotton onto a British ship that was about to get under way.[41] As Hindley & Gregorie wrote in late 1809, "Orders are pouring in upon us, notwithstanding Embargoes Nonintercourse &c&c."[42]

How did Charleston's cotton merchants cope with being cut off from their primary customer? By smuggling cotton to Britain through other ports. The early American statistician Timothy Pitkin commented that of all the cotton that was sent to Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Spain, Portugal, Madeira, the Azores, and Florida in 1810, "the greatest part of which undoubtedly went to Great-Britain."[43] The Spanish and Portuguese Empires, weakening due to events in Europe and thus increasingly open to American shippers, were important to these smuggling routes. For sea island cotton, which was produced primarily in South Carolina and Georgia, nearly 99 percent of the crop went directly to Great Britain in 1806. Only 27 percent and 55 percent were sent there in 1809 and 1810, respectively; approximately 30 percent went to Spain and Portugal and their colonies during the same years.[44]

Smuggling was a national problem that "transformed . . . obscure points on the globe . . . into major entrepôts for the exchange of British manufactured goods and American colonial produce."[45] Amelia Island, between Florida and Georgia, was a favored location for Charleston merchants trying to smuggle cotton to England.[46] Correspondence was remarkably open about this practice. The successful merchant Christopher Fitzsimons wrote General Wade Hampton, "the purchasers that are

now marketing are chiefly for Amelia Island," adding that the current purchasers were persnickety enough to take only new cotton, packed in noncotton bags.[47] Thomas Henry Hindley offered to ship cotton from Charleston or Savannah to Liverpool through Amelia Island, saying, "We can manage it well for you, as we shall keep an Agent [on Amelia Island] during the present situation of things."[48]

The trade continued even though merchants complained about irregularities in the Spanish system. Bribing customs agents there was part of the cost of doing business. An agent explained that he had been able to reduce the duties on his customer's cotton "through Mr. Clough's Influence with the Collector at Amelia & a Doubloon or two's assistance."[49] Sometimes shipments were delayed. Hindley & Gregorie explained, "No one who has not been at Amelia Island can concieve the causes which produce so much confusion & appearance of want of regularity__ we trust you will impute it to the circumstances attending the trade__ & not to any neglect on our part."[50] But by late 1809, Hindley & Gregorie reported, "Things go on swimmingly via Amelia and a great quantity of cotton is gone on and going."[51] The practice of shipping through Amelia Island seems to have declined after 1810, probably because of increased military turbulence in Florida, but while it lasted, it helped nurture trading connections for Charleston's merchants in the Spanish-speaking world.[52]

Neutral Trade

American merchants began to expand their trading horizons as soon as the Revolution ended. For Charleston's merchants, one alluring new trading partner was the West Indies, paradoxically both wealthy and impoverished; rich in sugar but poor in food and manufactured goods. The French West Indies opened to American traders in 1784 and 1785. Though the Spanish colonies were mostly closed until the Napoleonic Wars began, except for the desperate need for flour in Havana, other nations' islands, for example, Sweden's, took some American products.[53] The British islands were closed to many products after the Revolution but did import barrel staves and flour.[54] Before the Napoleonic Wars, much of what was exported to the West Indies seems to have been food and timber products from America. In 1788, for example, John Couper's cargo of rice and corn sold in Dutch St. Eustatia, and his captain bought Jamaican rum with the proceeds. The captain requested that Couper prepare a return cargo of barrel staves and shingles.[55]

Americans became increasingly important trading partners with the West Indies after the European wars began in 1793, especially after Jay's Treaty provided protection from British attacks on American shipping. As neutral carriers, Americans were permitted to ship colonial produce between the West Indies and Europe, as long as the captain stopped at an American port. Charleston was well placed for this purpose, because it was so close to the Caribbean.[56]

At first, the French West Indies took more of America's exports than the islands of other nations. Saint Domingue (Haiti) was the most important French possession until the Haitian Revolution of 1791.[57] William Heysham in Port au Prince explained to the Charleston firm Jones & Clarke what it was like doing business in Haiti during the Revolution.

> they now dread the Negroes, setting this town on fire, and every house Is obligd to have a Cask of water before the door; 169 Plantations round the Cape are destroy'd with all the Sugar Coffee &c and some thousands of Negroes are now about 150 miles from this, who they expect daily to advance and destroy all before them, what is worse, they increase daily, and there is no armey to prevent their depredations & I fear, before the close of this week, that they will advance towards this Town which must be attended with fatal Consequences to numbers of its Inhabitants.

Heysham added that he had successfully sold the flour Jones & Clarke had sent him and purchased sugar in return, even though, he wrote, "I am afraid to walk at Night for fear the guards should take me for a Negroe, & fire at me."[58]

Charleston boasted some strong players in the trade with France and its colonies. D. Strobel eventually moved to Bordeaux, where he became a partner in several successful firms trading with America.[59] Christopher Fitzsimons sent his son Cashal to live with the Bordeaux merchant John Gernon.[60] But according to the historian Silvia Marzagalli, "The maritime traffic [to Bordeaux] handled by Baltimore and Charleston shipowners, who accounted for one ship out of four before 1793, decreased to less than 10 percent" between 1793 and 1815.[61] These results from Bordeaux may indicate that Charlestonians' share of the neutral trade between France and its colonies was dropping.

The French neutral trade declined for all American merchants as France became convinced that the United States was its political enemy. Increasing restrictions on American trade meant that the French seized over three hundred ships between July 1796 and June 1797.[62] After 1799,

the French islands were surpassed by the British and Spanish islands as consumers of American exports. Export levels to the French islands never recovered fully after the War of 1812.[63]

The political sensibilities of Charleston's merchants may have made them less inclined to trade with the French. Charleston's merchants had been strong supporters of the Constitution, and most remained Federalist and therefore anti-France. A French businessman in Charleston named Mr. Deliol served as a local metaphor for French deviousness. In 1797, Deliol was arrested for debt and put in prison. Joseph Peace wrote that Deliol would probably be willing to pay what he owed, "from the operation of the newly acquired repugnance in the Breasts of Frenchmen to the privation of liberty."[64] But Deliol had a different scheme in mind. He had decided to hide some of his money and to take the protection of the Insolvent Debtors Act. As he was standing up in court, preparing to kiss the Bible and swear that he could not pay his debts, the prosecuting attorney asked to enter a letter into evidence. In this letter, written to a Mrs. Laverque, Deliol promised that he would give the money he had hidden to Laverque as soon as he was free from prosecution. According to George Forrest, this letter "had so material an effect on Deliol that his strength faild him & he fell aparently lifeless in Court."[65] Deliol went back to prison.

Merchants also disliked the French because they feared that Haiti-style uprisings might spread to Charleston, imported by the wave of white refugees who had brought their slaves with them.[66] J. F. Henning reported a rumored rebellion "of the french Negroes" in 1797.[67] Contemporaries believed that the slaves planned "to fire the City and to act here as they formerly done at St. Domingo." Two slaves and a freeman were hanged, and more were transported out of South Carolina. [68] Henning added, "This has given us already a good deal of trouble as every night 2 Compagnies are obliged to be out watching the powder magazine near town & patroling the town & another the magazine at 4 miles, which is no pleasant business these Cold nights."[69] Henning appears to have regarded the patrolling as a waste of time after the trials had already occurred, but he did not lose his sense that the Afro-French were up to no good. Two years later, he reported the arrest of several suspected French spies, including "3 french mulattoes."[70]

Though often affected by political restrictions, trade with the British West Indies continued as a high percentage of exports up to the War of 1812. But the real change from the period before the Revolution was trade with Spain and its colonies, which generally grew between 1793

and the War of 1812, except during the Peace of Amiens in 1802–3. Here the United States benefited from the increasing weakness of the Spanish Empire and the needs of the Spanish colonies for imported food and goods.[71] Cuba and its port, Havana, and Mexico, especially when reached through the port of Veracruz, were of special importance to American merchants.[72] By 1798, Cuba had seen the United States replace Spain as its major trading partner.[73]

Charlestonians seem to have been especially eager to trade with Cuba. Trade may have been fostered by plantation families who fled Haiti for Charleston and then moved on to Cuba.[74] "In 1797," E. S. Thomas explained, "it was the *fashion* to make shipments to Havanna," and he invested $3,000 in a voyage, only to lose it all when the merchant in Cuba went bankrupt.[75]

Others were more fortunate. A snapshot of the fortune to be made in neutral trading with the Spanish colonies can be seen in the letters of Christopher Fitzsimons. Fitzsimons regularly sent an assortment of goods from Spain to Havana in exchange for Cuban sugar, which he resold in Spain, and molasses, which he brought to his own distillery. After the slave trade reopened in South Carolina, he gained access to Cuban ports by making sure that his cargoes included a few slaves for sale. From the mid-1790s, Charleston dominated the American trade in slaves to Cuba, and the number of shipments may have accelerated after the international slave trade was reopened in South Carolina. In 1805, for example, "scarcely a vessel left Charleston for Havana" without slaves for sale on board.[76] However, Fitzsimons claimed that he included slaves in his cargo "in order to gain admission into the Havana" and does not seem to have seen the slave trade as the primary purpose of his enterprise.[77] At least in later years, he was deterred by U.S. law from shipping American slaves to Havana, arguing, "was Slaves Shipped off, in large Numbers__it would be attended with danger" of "*severe Penalties*."[78]

Rarely did Fitzsimons send South Carolinian or Georgian produce to Cuba, which is perhaps not surprising given that what the islands needed most from the mainland was food and lumber. However, if Fitzsimons is typical, this would differentiate Philadelphia's trade in staples with Cuba, which was primarily based on the desire to sell Pennsylvanian flour, from Charleston's trade, which was ultimately founded on the slave trade and on the value of West Indian produce in Europe.[79]

A second, harder to document reason for trade with Cuba was its status as "the fundamental nucleus in the Caribbean for illicit commerce."[80] Many of Charleston's merchants, if not Fitzsimons, smuggled

British manufactures to the Spanish colonies. A contemporary observer, the bookseller E. S. Thomas, explained, "The forced and smuggling trade to the then Spanish and Portuguese South American colonies, in British manufactures, was immense, and extremely lucrative, bringing in return large quantities of specie, and innumerable cargoes of coffee, cocoa, and sugar, which were re-shipped to Hamburg, Bremen, Amsterdam, &c."[81] At the time, British merchandise could be illicitly obtained in Hamburg, a major consumer of Carolina rice.[82] A more direct way to access British manufactures was through the British West Indies. The historian Adrian Pearce has noted that Charleston was one of the four most prominent home ports for ships traveling between the British West Indies and Cuba, a surprising number of which arrived in Cuba "ostensibly entered in ballast" but probably smuggling British goods.[83] British pottery was a special favorite in Cuba, and Charleston's merchants took part in importing it to Havana, by legal or illegal means.[84]

Charleston's trade to Mexico is less well documented than the trade to Cuba but seems to have been vigorous.[85] A British-born schoolmaster residing in Charleston wrote in 1799, "The Merchants here drive a very gainful clandestine trade to the Spanish Main, La Vera Cruz, New Orleans, &c, in swift-sailing schooner-built vessels, which tho' attended with the risk of being captured by British and French cruizers, is very successfully carried on, at an enormous profit of from 150 pounds to 200 and 300 p. Cent." One trip to Vera Cruz with an assortment of dry goods, including muslins, earned $80,000 for a $20,000 cargo, which was returned in sugar and gold and silver dollars. The dollars were smuggled back inside the ship's guns, "loaded . . . to the muzzle."[86]

Because of the large amount of smuggling that was occurring, it is unclear how much of the neutral trade was directed from Charleston compared to other ports. Using contemporary reexport statistics, Douglass North has argued that neutral trading was far more important to Northern merchants and that Southern prosperity ultimately came from the rise of cotton.[87] The latter part of this statement is undoubtedly true in the long run, but there are reasons to question the first part of this statement. Local analysts of the boom before the War of 1812 believed that neutral trading had made the fortunes and shaped the behavior of Charleston's merchants. As Joseph Cardozo later commented, this was the generation "of merchants who grew out of the direct foreign trade of Charleston with the ports of Europe, arising from the neutral relations of the United States."[88] Thomas wrote that in Charleston, "many of the merchants accumulated large fortunes, which enabled them to cope with

the wealthiest planters in their style of living."[89] Like the trade in indents, the boom in neutral trading was influential, though it did not last.

Return of the International Slave Trade

Planters panicked at the end of the Revolution to find a quarter of their enslaved labor force had vanished. Not surprisingly, South Carolina's legislature reopened the international slave trade as soon as possible. But by 1787, both the foreign and domestic slave trades were closed. Contemporary lawmakers claimed they were concerned about individual indebtedness; sectional concerns also came into play, as low country representatives, from a region with a large slave population, were much more opposed to the slave trade than upcountry representatives, with their expanding white population.[90] The domestic slave trade was reopened in 1788. In 1792, it was closed again. For the following decade, South Carolinians were afraid to admit strange slaves, because of slave rebellions in Virginia and Saint Domingue.[91] The state even increased the penalty for smuggling in 1800.[92]

Reopened on December 17, 1803, the international slave trade flourished in Charleston until federally ended on January 1, 1808. For slightly over four years, South Carolina was the only state to permit the trade.[93] South Carolina's legislators seem to have been eager to supply laborers for the state's expanding cotton production—perceiving African slaves as more docile than native-born ones—and also to provide slaves for the newly acquired Louisiana Territory.[94] James McMillin recently estimated that 74,500 people were brought to South Carolina as slaves between 1800 and 1810, or about 68 percent of the 109,200 slaves imported nationally in that decade. During this period Charleston was "one of the great slaving ports of the world."[95]

Whenever the international slave trade became legal, the pent-up demand for slaves drained resources from all other concerns. Thomas recounted an unfortunately timed venture into book importation.

> In November, 1803, I returned from my fourth voyage, with a printed catalogue of fifty thousand volumes of books. . . . I had only got them opened, and arranged for sale three days, when news arrived from Columbia, that the legislature, then in session, had opened the port for the importation of slaves from Africa. The news had not been five hours in the city, before two large *British Guineamen*, that had been laying off and on the port for several days,

> expecting it, came up to town; and from that day my business began to decline. . . . Previous to this, the planters had large sums of money laying idle in the banks, which they liberally expended, not only for their actual, but supposed wants. A great change at once took place in every thing. Vessels were fitted out in numbers, for the coast of Africa, and as fast as they returned, their cargoes were bought up with avidity, not only consuming the large funds that had been accumulating, but all that could be procured, and finally exhausting credit, and mortgaging the slaves for payment; many of whom were not redeemed for ten years after, to my knowledge. This state of things continued, until put a stop to by that provision of the Constitution which forbade the trade after the first of January, 1808. So completely absorbed were the funds of the agriculturalists, in many instances, that those who had been in the habit of indulging in every luxury, and paying for it at the moment, took credit for a bundle of quills and a ream of paper.—For myself, I was upwards of five years disposing of my large stock, at a sacrifice of more than one half, in all the principal towns, from Augusta, in Georgia, to Boston.[96]

As Thomas makes clear, a slave-trading mania descended on Charleston for the four years that it was legal. By this point, it was obvious that the manufacturers' need for cotton had not reached its limit. Planters saw no reason not to drive themselves into debt, to exhaust every possible source of funds, even mortgage the enslaved people themselves, in order to buy new slaves for the ever-expanding cotton lands. For slave merchants, it was a brief opportunity to acquire incredible wealth. Why not send out as many ships as possible? Someone would undoubtedly buy the slaves—and for once, merchants could know when the boom was going to stop and plan accordingly.

Merchants treated the enslaved people they brought to Charleston and sold in a shockingly inhumane manner. McMillan has documented several voyages with horrific death rates. On one slaving voyage from Mozambique, the Charlestonian Alexander M'Clure allowed 300 of 543 Africans to die.[97] Slaves who arrived to an adverse market were routinely kept on board in Charleston's port until prices improved, with deadly results. As the legal slave trade approached its end in the winter of 1807, merchants stockpiled thousands of people in ships docked at Gadsden's Wharf, waiting for their prices to rise. A contemporary writer reported that "close confinement, scanty clothing, sharp weather, and improper

food created a variety of disorders; which, together with dysentery and some contagious diseases to which the Negroes are subject, considerably increased the mortality." McMillan calculated that as many as 1,600 people may have died during these months of being forced to remain on slave ships in Charleston Harbor. Those who died were simply tossed into the water. A local editor was repulsed by the idea that Charlestonians ate fish "that have fattened on the carcasses of dead negroes."[98]

As the only state to open the international slave trade, South Carolina was reviled by other Americans. Southerners worried that South Carolina's action would trigger a Haiti-like uprising. The *Raleigh Register* wrote that it was "a detested short sighted policy, which in order to increase the wealth of a few can impose upon a state the greatest calamity with which any nation has ever been afflicted." Northerners were often troubled for moral reasons. The pamphleteer Ann Alexander, a Philadelphian, was horrified that "a custom, so barbarous as well as so repugnant to every principle of humanity and justice, as the African Slave-Trade, should be continued in this or any other nation."[99]

Despite South Carolina's economic dependence on slavery, the decision to legalize the slave trade was controversial within the state, especially in the low country. As the historian Jed Shugerman found, "Of the twenty-five low country representatives who voted to reopen the trade, fourteen were not returned to the house next year [1804]." Four others, responding to their constituents, reversed their positions.[100] A congressman from South Carolina said that merchants who attempted to extend the international slave trade past its deadline were "so taken up with their idol, Mammon, with their zeal after profit, that they cared not what became of the country if their coffers were filled."[101] The controversial nature of the slave trade made later Charlestonians claim that it had primarily been the responsibility of "strangers." I examine the accuracy of this claim below.

Identifying the Merchants

Finance, staple crops, neutral trading, the slave trade: the period between the ratification of the Constitution and the War of 1812 brought new opportunities for Charleston-based merchants, and hundreds of men came to town to make their fortunes. But who were these driven souls, so willing to engage in businesses that were morally suspect even by the standards of their time? Some clues can be found in the city directories. Though often inaccurate (the numbers in the table below should

not be taken for the absolute number of merchants working in Charleston), the increasing and decreasing numbers of listed merchants indicates the timing of the boom (Table 3.1). From a nadir in 1782 during the British occupation, the number of merchants in Charleston built to a peak in 1807, declined sharply during the War of 1812, boomed again after the war, and dropped back to preboom numbers by 1825, before stabilizing again a decade later. This chapter focuses on data from the years of the first boom through 1807.

The length of time that these men were listed in the directory indicates whether they were newly arrived in the city or local men who had changed careers (e.g., from retail shopkeeper to overseas trading merchant). The 1794 city directory recorded 214 merchants. About 51 percent of them had been listed in the 1790 directory, and only about 11 percent had been in Charleston in 1782 during the Revolution. Similarly, in the 1807 city directory, the last full year that the international slave trade was legal, the number of men listed as merchants reached its zenith, at 472, over twice as many as had been listed thirteen years earlier. Again, only about half of them were listed four years earlier. The number of merchants in Charleston grew rapidly, promoted by immigration from Great Britain, France, Germany, and elsewhere in America.[102]

Merchants rarely stayed in Charleston for very long. Of the 241 merchants listed in the directory in 1796, fewer than half remained seven years later, in 1803. [103] The 1807 directory listed 472 merchants, but only about 41 percent remained six years later, in 1813. Though the first block of time stretched through the boom years and the second included the wartime depression, merchants were nearly as transient under both conditions. In general, Charleston's merchants seem to have tried their fortunes in the city for a brief period and then left to retire or try again elsewhere.

Contemporary observers often complained that very few local boys grew up to be merchants. E. S. Thomas listed the proprietors of the twenty-one most important firms in Charleston in 1795, then mentioned that "not one of the above was a native of South Carolina, except for Mr. Stoney."[104] J. B. Dunlop, who visited Charleston between 1810 and 1811, concluded, "The young men are either bred to the Law enter into the army or Spend their days in Idleness and they leave the profits of Commerce to be enjoyed exclusively by Strangers: It is a rare thing indeed, for a Carolinian to follow the avocation of a Merchant."[105] These complaints seem to have been accurate. In this period, most of Charleston's merchants lacked strong local ties; they were typically men who came to Charleston to export cotton, to engage in neutral trading, or to import slaves.

Table 3.1. Number of Merchants Listed in the Charleston Directory, 1782–1835

Year	*Merchants*
1782	135
1790	199
1794	214
1796	(some pages missing) 241
1803	336
1807	472
1813	247
1819	429
1822	355
1825	214
1829	173
1835	223

However, slave-trading merchants seem to have been less foreign than merchants in general. Of the merchants in the 1807 city directory found on James McMillin's list of slave traders, about 63 percent had been there in 1803, and about 58 percent remained in 1813, 37 percent in 1819, and 30 percent in 1822.[106] For merchants in general in the 1807 city directory, about 50 percent had been there in 1803, and about 41 percent were still there in 1813, 29 percent in 1819, and 25 percent in 1822. (See Table 3.2.) Slave-trading merchants seem to have been less transient than the average merchant, perhaps because of their greater wealth. Because men who sold slaves were supposed to extend a considerable amount of credit to their customers, it was a trade that was open only to the successful.

Observers noted the ethnic diversity of Charleston's merchants. A visitor said that he saw in Charleston the "mixture and jostling together of men of all classes and nations . . . the desperate slave trader, privateer, and pirate from Cuba and the Spanish main, the keen Jew from Poland, and the keener Scotchman from the Clyde."[107] Scottish merchants came to Charleston to profit from the boom years. Morris & Brailsford wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1789:

Table 3.2. 1807 Directory-Listed Merchants, Percent Listed in Previous and Following Years

Year	*Slave Trading*	*Non–Slave Trading*
1803	63%	50%
1813	58%	41%
1819	37%	29%
1822	30%	25%

> To see the whole Wealth of our Country centering in the Hands of our decided Enemies, to see nine tenths of our Produce carried out of our Parts by British Vessels, and in walking our Streets, whether convinced by the Dialect or the Names of those who supply our wants, that we should rather conceive ourselves in the Highlands of Scotland, than in an American State, is the source of painful Reflection to every Citizen who values the Happiness or wishes to extend the Consequence and Prosperity of his Country.[108]

As this passage makes clear, for some merchants, patriotism shaded into anti-Scots bias. The number of Jewish merchants also surprised visitors; between 1776 and 1820 Charleston was home to more Jews than "any other city in America."[109] This ethnic diversity may have contributed to the perception that nearly all merchants were foreign, with little rootedness in the community, regardless of whether they intended to remain in Charleston.

Statistics from the Charleston Directory—which listed only merchants who had permanent residences in Charleston—show the predominance of English surnames. After a spike in Scottish surnames during the Revolution, the number of Scots in town declined rapidly. These statistics should be used with caution, however, because the directory included only the stable population of merchants and not the sojourners who spent the winter buying staple crops in Charleston and the summer buying manufactured goods in Britain, for example. Even though most merchants in the directory had English surnames, their numbers seem to have slowly decreased as the number of merchants with surnames from other nations gently rose between the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 (Table 3.3; Graph 3.1). In other words, the spike

Table 3.3. Ethnicity, from City Directory

	1782	*1790*	*1794*	*1796*	*1803*	*1807*	*1813*	*1819*	*1822*	*1825*	*1829*	*1835*
% English	40	49	46	46	45	40	43	48	50	49	49	47
% Scottish	36	17	20	23	22	20	26	14	19	20	22	21
% Irish	3	5	3	4	6	7	4	7	4	6	5	7
% French	4	5	5	4	3	5	2	3	2	1	1	4
% Dutch	0	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
% German	1	6	5	3	5	3	6	4	4	6	3	3
% Jewish	1	1	0	4	0	2	1	3	3	1	4	4

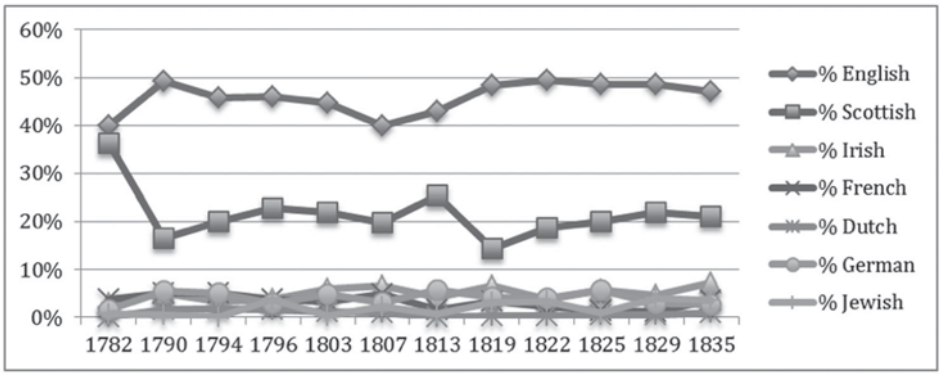
Note: Calculated by the author using city directories and Hanks, *Dictionary of American Family Names*.

in Charleston's mercantile population in 1807 was from non-English sources. This would not be the case in 1819, as discussed in chapter 6.

Charleston notables criticized merchants for being "mere *Birds of Passage*,"[110] but merchants were not the only skilled, educated workers who drifted through the Atlantic world to wherever the prospects seemed best. T. A. Milford has noted the itinerant careers of lawyers in the prerevolutionary period. Foreign-born artisans increasingly brought their skills to antebellum America; as Bruce Laurie noted, "In every major Northern city by 1860 just about a third of the printers, almost half the building tradesmen, and nearly three-fourths of the shoemakers, tailors, and cabinetmakers were foreign-born."[111] In general, scholars have not paid enough attention to the numbers of foreigners who worked in the white-collar and well-paid blue-collar occupations that became defined as the American middle class.

Mobile as they were, merchants participated actively in Charleston's civic life. Of the 114 city government positions listed in the 1803 Almanac, 41 percent were held by merchants. In 1808, merchants held 29 percent of 75 positions and 38 percent of 146 in 1812.[112] Participation in politics at the state level, however, was dropping. According to Kaplanoff, 22 percent of South Carolina's legislators were merchants in 1766, 12 percent in 1787–88, 5 percent in 1791–95, 6 percent in 1810–15, and 3 percent in 1850.[113] Of the men listed as members of fire brigades in Charleston before 1812, 44 percent were merchants.[114] As is well known, fire departments tended to attract the young and rowdy. Conversely, the St. Cecelia

Graph 3.1. Ethnicity, from City Directory



From Table 3.3.

Society, which staged concerts for members of the elite, counted just 18 percent merchants in leadership positions before 1812.[115]

The merchants of postrevolutionary Charleston were transient and multiethnic, and while they might be interested in local politics, they were less engaged at the state level. They were more comfortable in civic organizations for young sports than in clubs for the elite. Beyond that, we must look at their correspondence to see what sort of men they were.

The New American Middle Class

Because merchants used their letters to build personal connections with prospective trading partners, their correspondence gives valuable insight into the nature of middle-class culture. Colonial merchants often seemed to be undergoing the painful process of trying to make themselves into British gentlemen: self-possessed, witty, learned. Their postrevolutionary peers no longer cared about gentility. A surprising number of business letters were written, for example, when the correspondents were drunk or hung over. "Horry made me very drunk last night," wrote Richard Harrison. "If therefore you can read what I have written I shall consider myself fortunate."[116] Michael Lazarus received a letter from a planter client, which, he responded, "gave me much felicity in observing you was partaking of so much mirth as to be not only three sheets in the wind, but almost Elevatid in the Air."[117] The sociability of the prewar years remained crucial to postwar business. While merchants may have seen themselves as "Strangers" rather than "Carolinians," their letters

across the Atlantic intentionally fostered a sense of middle-class community with merchants abroad. But the masculine ideal had become much rougher and more physical, tied to sporting culture.[118]

Of course, there were limits on what was acceptable in a business associate. G. Whitfield was unable to place his friend Robert Brown's son in a situation in Charleston because of his behavior.

> When he first came he got acquainted wh. Mr Teasdale, family Mrs W's Mother Brothers & Sisters &c and Spent the whole of his time amongst them__ frequently going a Shooting &c and wd. return home at abt. 10 at Night This connection was rather too Steady__ not suitable to his extravagant turn, and without much dificulty, he found a parcel Young chaps that suited him exactly__ Staying till 1.2.& 3 in the Morng. & frequently all Night in Mullatto Alley, was the fruits of this fine connection.

In the end, "houses [were] taken & furnished common Girls [were] taken into keeping and their debts paid."[119] It was lucky for young Mr. Brown that he was a rich man's son, because he had no future in trade. It is worth noting, however, that while Whitfield balked at Brown's expensive whoremongering, he had no problem with Mr. Brown going hunting and socializing late into the night.

Perhaps the extent of the overlap of middle-class business culture with sporting culture in the early republic was a result of political independence from Britain, for a similar process occurred in twentieth-century India. In British-ruled India, "the British firms preferred managers of a certain gentility, who saw business as a gentleman's game and shared their contempt for tawdry moneymaking." But after India gained its independence, a new sort of businessman took over. They shared a "no-holds-barred, bottom-up approach that refused to accept 'no,' that defied the stuffy Anglicized stickler for rules, that put human relationships above everything: commerce as it was played on the streets, not as a parlor game."[120]

This contradicts what we think we know about the middle class. In the nineteenth century, Americans and Europeans often claimed that the middle class had a moral sense superior to that of other classes. As one Virginian wrote, "The middle class in every community . . . being equally removed from the temptations of poverty and the allurements of great opulence, is uniformly the most virtuous."[121] Middling comforts, according to a British analyst, promoted middle-class engagement in civic improvement: "The middling class, those who are above want and not

exposed to luxury, are comparatively . . . moral, commanding their passions, and endeavouring to diffuse happiness around them."[122] This link has endured in modern historiography. Many historians have placed the middle class at the center of the humanitarian projects of the nineteenth century, such as abolitionism.[123] And for those Southern members of the middle class who supported slavery, historians have emphasized commitment to "economic and cultural modernization."[124]

Recent scholarship on business behavior should make us question the purported virtuousness of the middle class in the early republic. British colonial economic strategy had been rooted in mercantilism: promoting financial and industrial development in the mother country while restricting the colonies to agricultural production.[125] The Revolution liberated Americans to engage in previously discouraged occupations such as the international slave trade, manufacturing, and banking.[126] The post-Constitution boom, in common with the relaxation of governmental authority after the Revolution, freed trade from many of the ethical scruples that had once bound it. Seemingly staid occupations were actually thoroughgoing examples of cowboy capitalism. Banks loaned recklessly to insiders and blanketed the country with worthless notes.[127]

Even trades that had existed before the war showed the new spirit. Retail trade was especially corrupt.[128] Swindling clerks jousted with haggling customers in "a contest of knavery" on retail streets in every urban center. Customers demanded to look at all the goods in the shop, in hope that the beleaguered clerk would offer them a discount. Meanwhile, clerks offered flattery while concealing the poor quality of their goods.[129] In a contemporary short story, a storekeeper tells his new clerk that he hires young men "trained . . . to industry, perseverance, honest frugality, and the duties of a Christian man." The clerk agrees that he does, indeed, embody all these middle-class virtues. Then the storekeeper outlines what the clerk's job entails:

> If a woman asks whether four-penny calico, or six-penny delaines will wash, say 'yes, ma'am, *beautifully*; I've tried them, or seen them tried'; and if they say, 'are these ten cent flannels real *Shaker flannels?* or the ninepence hose *all merino?*' better not contradict them . . . when you make change, never take a ten cent piece and two cents for a shilling, but give it as often as practicable . . . in measuring, always put your thumb *so*, and when you move the yardstick forward, shove your thumb an inch or so *back*; in

> measuring *close* you may manage to squeeze out five yards from four and three-quarters, you understand?[130]

In short, the clerk's job was to lie to his customers, and to steal from them.

The letters of Charleston's merchants reflect the rough-and-tumble nature of antebellum business and suggest that the virtuousness of the nineteenth-century middle class was exaggerated by its contemporary advocates. Though merchants were trustworthy and reliable with close friends and family members, they were not "the most virtuous" members of society with casual customers and the government. As England became an industrial giant, the need to feed the machines drove demand for slaves and cotton. Well aware that the boom could end at any time, Charleston's merchants were willing to do nearly anything to fill these demands. They cheated their customers, cheated the government, and only behaved ethically with their friends and family. Such a system was functional because everyone knew what to expect: *caveat emptor*.

Charleston's merchants often overcharged short-term customers. Jacob Rapelye asked his relative Paul in New York to send some kitchen equipment to his landlady, telling him, "You can charge twenty five percent [commission]_ by making out a ficticious Invoice."[131] The retail shops that lined King Street provided ample opportunities for fraud. A young Yankee in Charleston commented on the lack of ethics he witnessed as an employee of E. L. Miller, a dry goods merchant: "I've to sovereign a contempt for the, *low art, Finesse, cunning & sarvility* mde use of now a days in the dry goods trade__ *those are but other words for swindling* Miller tired to persuade me it was indispensably necessary if one intends to live in the business__ if thats the case think I I'll not live by it [*sic*]." The young man added, "I would think my own Father an accomplish'd knave if he had been any time, & made money in the dry goods line in *King St*."[132] Charleston's merchants believed that customers knew what they were in for when they went shopping. If they were cheated, they had only themselves to blame.

The government and police force in postwar Charleston did not protect citizens from swindling. Modern Americans take the police force for granted, but it functioned quite differently in the early republic. Though a constabulary existed in Charleston, historians agree that as in other major cities, it cared more about "social order" than "the apprehension of criminals." Charleston patrollers, like those elsewhere in the South, focused their efforts on repressing the slave population.[133]

One example shows how crime was treated in postwar Charleston. In early 1804, the merchant John Day loaded trunks with gold in Charleston

and shipped them to Savannah. But the boat was becalmed, and the passengers disembarked, including the man charged with watching the trunks. When the passengers returned, the gold, not surprisingly, was gone. Day had left Charleston by the time the theft was discovered. Confronted with an unhelpful police force, Day entrusted several friends with the task of tracking down the gold.

In particular, Day became convinced that an old Dutch man who worked for his friends, Alexander Ewing and James Ross, was the thief. So Ewing and Ross came up with a plan to determine the old man's guilt or innocence. At three in the morning, Ross woke the old man, holding a gun to his chest. Claiming the man had confessed to the crime in his sleep, Ross threatened to shoot him unless he gave up the location of the gold and his accomplice. But the old man "evinc'd no symptom of guilt," Ross and Ewing reported, and "we feel satisfied of his innocence."[134] There was an undercurrent of danger and lawlessness to business in Charleston. Like cowboys in a Western movie, Charleston's merchants resorted to violence because they knew the state would not help them. Because they expected so little from the government and so many of them had only weak ties to South Carolina, many merchants had absolutely no ethical qualms about cheating either local or national governments, which explains the endemic smuggling of cotton, British manufactures, and slaves. Perhaps more shocking than the way these merchants behaved is how we know about their actions: they proudly described them in letters to prospective business partners as a reason to employ their services.

The middle-class ideal of the eighteenth-century—the genteel, intelligent servant—dissipated after the Revolution. A picture emerges from mercantile letters of the middle-class values nineteen-century merchants most esteemed: energy, cunning, diligence, and reliability. What a man wanted was a partner who was willing to brave the cannons of the revenue cutter, lie about the illicit origins of a slave, bribe a customs officer, or smuggle goods out through a purportedly closed port. Hard work was at the center of middle-class identity, and virtue was much further down the list of valued assets in a trading partner. As they would have seen it, the goal was to run a business, not a Sunday school.

Conclusion

In the early twentieth century, according to the historian Stephanie Yuhl, artists lured tourists to Charleston by rewriting the city's antebellum

history. They created an "illusion of Charleston as a world where all the whites were aristocrats and all the blacks were servants," an illusion that omits "the thousands of Charlestonians—from the Italian grocer and Irish streetcar conductor to the working-class Anglo-American with no ancestral claim on the plantation past—who comprised much of the city's white population."[135] To think of Charleston as a city of aristocrats and slaves is to overlook what drew white men to Charleston in the years between the Revolution and the War of 1812: it was a city of worldly strivers, leveraging its new American identity and access to Southern and Caribbean plantations to profit outside the traditional British Empire. The merchants who came to Charleston represented a new kind of middle class, less concerned with becoming gentlemen and more concerned with getting ahead in a hurry. In a mutable world, these men found that their personal relationships gave them economic support and protection.

4 / Friendship and Sympathy, Family and Stability

In 1809, Charles Machin was robbed by his business partner. Nearly destitute, lacking even a winter coat, Machin fell into a state of melancholy. While he was in this condition, his friend William Parker discovered him.

> [Parker] expostulated with me, on my want of firmness__ to which I listened a, a mere statute unable to speak.__ his arguments were impressive and his noble Soul expanded when he pourtrayed to me the situation of others__ far worse than mine__ I felt its force and as if posessed of new life__ Springing from my seat I was caught in his embrace and in the fervency of the Strongest Affection he clasped me to that heart__ which knew how to beat in simpathy for the distresses of another.__ And with a Soul too large to inhabit so small a space__ he vowed Eternal Friendship.__ With the enthusiasm of men bewildered, whos hearts were ready to burst from thier narrow limits__ We embraced each other__ the warmth of which was sensibly felt__ and as if the same feeling possessed each Soul__ our acknowledgements were expressed by the grasp of Friendship.[1]

Parker then gave Machin the money he needed to cover his debts. To a modern reader, this reminiscence might seem overwrought and unintentionally erotic, but Machin's initial desperation would have been understood by his contemporaries. He lived in an era nearly without institutional safety nets, even for men who had once been economically comfortable.

Parker, we are meant to understand, saved Machin from economic desperation and possibly imprisonment. Machin's memoir was shaped not only by the Romantic language of sensibility and sympathy but also by the real and omnipresent danger lurking for middle-class entrepreneurs.

In the boom years before the War of 1812, business was even riskier than usual for Charleston's merchants, as they broke into new markets and new businesses. A merchant's primary resource in times of trouble was his friends and family. In a world where networks of means were thin and weak, being a merchant was a relationship business. Unless this fact is taken into account, merchants' decisions would seem economically unsound.

Sympathy, Sensibility, and Friendship

The commercial world of the early republic lacked the financial instruments and government support we associate with trade. Government was generally unable or unwilling to protect the merchants' interests, even when they were not engaged in smuggling. Local institutions such as banks, insurance companies, and the Chamber of Commerce remained weak and resources for debtors inadequate. The situation was even worse outside the cities. There were no banks on Amelia Island to lend money for cotton purchases, and Charleston-based merchants complained of the Floridians' "want of system."

For contemporary thinkers, the solution to weak networks of means was friendship. Friendships formed the basis of communities of all sorts: political, religious, and voluntary.[2] British and Americans of middling income increasingly designed their homes to promote sociability.[3] Charleston's merchants, in their letters, sought to foster at a distance the sense of familiarity and ease that naturally developed in their parlors.[4] The historian Richard Godbeer recently argued that late eighteenth-century men felt that their friendships "depended on two fundamental attributes: *sensibility*, a capacity for refined and yet profound emotional feeling, including and especially in response to the feelings of others; and *sympathy*, a compatibility in temperament combined with a commitment to empathetic feeling that enabled supportive companionship."[5] Though Machin referred to both sensibility and sympathy in his memoir, business letters relied far more on cultivating a sense of the latter than demonstrating the former.

While early nineteenth-century merchants were often intentionally rough-hewn in their letters to each other, they also had a more reflective

side. They frequently wrote about their personal aspirations, revealing a shared understanding of a man's goals. Many were family men who justified their hard work and attention to business in terms of their duties to their dependents: wives, children, and other needy relatives. The ability to sire children was central to masculine identity; as the historian Amanda Vickery has written, "The father who led a handsome family into church radiated both an air of commanding respectability and a glow of unmistakable sexual success."[6] Men who were slow to start a family were jovially mocked by their peers.[7] For years, David Lamb teased Robert Henderson for remaining unmarried. When Henderson finally did marry, Lamb said that it was time for Henderson to start having children, or as he put it, "many feet may [you] manufacture for Childrens Stockings."[8] Lamb revealed his vision of the ideal mercantile family when he added, "I hope you will remember it is now late in the day with you & so make a good use of your time, I expect soon now to have my sons in the Counting House with me, I hope you have one on the Stocks [i.e., in stock] by this time but should that not be the case I hope you will not despair but always keep in mind that I was five years married before I got any thing."[9] Despite the lighthearted tone, it is clear that Lamb took great pleasure in having sons to carry on his business.

George Nelson's letters reveal how Charleston's merchants interacted with their business partner–friends. Unmarried, Nelson rarely had any contact with women, except during his awkward attempts to find a wife. Nelson rationalized his lack of romantic success: "as to me geting Married it is true we have a many very fine Ladies here some of which I have the pleasure of being acquainted with but you know old birds must not be caught with chaff."[10] Nelson did not take much emotional satisfaction from his family life. He generally treated his relatives as dependents rather than as equals. Most of his family was much poorer and less educated than he; he sent them money, and even a dictionary in the hope that it would make their letters more intelligible.[11]

Nelson's closest relationships were with other male merchants. He managed to make his fortune in the turbulent 1790s by investing in American government securities, but many of his friends were not so lucky. A series of letters reveals how his friend Samuel Bellamy (or Ballamy) slowly slid into failure. Finally, Nelson made Bellamy a very generous offer: "if it should so happen that your affairs should be past recovery you must come & live with me I am sorry here you make your Self so unhappy there are people in much worse Situation then you are you see you have neither wife nor family have a good heart."[12] At times, it must

have seemed to men like Nelson that wife and family were nothing but a burden; their true emotional life was lived with other men.

Even in the context of a business letter, merchants revealed their own weakness and fragility in ways that they could not with the women of their families. In this sense, the letters the merchant and planter James Hamilton received from his friends Zephaniah Kingsley and John Couper were far more intimate than the ones he received from his wife, Isabella. Kingsley wrote to Hamilton in 1805:

> This last year has been a period of Misfortunes so much so, that I allmost despair of ever accomplishing the wished for object of independance which seemed to be sometimes within my reach & then again totally to disappear: By experience I have learnt that fortune is neither to be won by prudence nor industry & have only to thank God that ambition the attendant of health has not yet deserted me & keeps hurrying me on like a Soldier in hopes of victory; yet well aware that if not soon obtained that period must come when nature will relax the Springs and leave me distanced in the course.[13]

Success tantalized Kingsley, lying just out of reach. He felt that the pursuit of wealth dehumanized him, turning him into a machine with its springs winding down. At the same time, it masculinized him, filling him with martial virtue. This was the essence of a man's struggle, he felt: to win security and financial independence for his family before time defeated him.

The same year, Hamilton's wife also wrote Hamilton about the risk of mercantile failure. James was concerned that a hurricane and financial mismanagement by a trusted agent had injured the family's fortunes. Isabella restated her gratitude for whatever material wealth her husband saw fit to provide to her.

> I feel no mortifications in regard to myself my dear Mr. H. I have always been provided for far beyond any thing I had a Right to expect and am not affraid of the future, pleased and happy with each other, I could live contented in that little Hut on St Simons [the location of the family's plantation] for ever if Necessary . . .

Isabella abruptly changed tone in the sentence, reminding her husband that she was not the only member of the family under his care:

> but my Child, that is the sore place, my Father & Mother are very anxious to keep her, it seem'd to be making up for my leaving them

> in the prospect of having the charge of her, and I think it will be most prudent untill we are settled give me your Opinion candidly as for my feellings I must put them out of the question, little Isabella I must place at School here with your approbation, I cannot give up the charge I have taken of her.[14]

Isabella's reassuring comments must have been heartening to her husband but also a little intimidating. Because she was dependent on him, she would not allow her husband to show signs of weakness. Her words served as a reminder of how many people needed him to be a good provider, beginning with his wife and including his nieces and nephews like little Isabella. The roles of men and women within the family were too distinct for any real fellow-feeling. Only another man could truly understand the difficulties of the mercantile world.[15]

What is also interesting about these letters is that though there is a great deal of sympathy and (I would argue) often a great deal of affection and intimacy in them, there is almost no sensibility—the "heart-pourings," tears, and embraces that Godbeer found so common in personal letters between men of the same period. Perhaps this sort of language was seen as inappropriate for a business letter, or it was primarily the vocabulary of the college-educated or the extremely young.

Turning business relationships into friendships provided emotional satisfaction, but on some level, Charleston's merchants must also have strategically fostered these relationships to promote their businesses. What merchant wouldn't prefer trading with a trusted friend? And as the cases of Machin and Bellamy suggest, merchants could often be generous with friends for the sake of preserving the friendship.

Family Life and the Search for Security

Business relationships were often based on intimate friendships. Family life, on the other hand, was about wealth and financial stability—or at least the merchants felt it should be. In 1804, Isabella Hamilton decided to enliven a letter to her husband, James, by including a rather spicy piece of gossip: "Mr. Colgaham thirty five years difference at least its said is married to a very gay Lady hardly twenty. she has drag'd him to Brighton & Windsor allready and make's him attend her to all publick places and is the gayest of the gay where ever she is." She proudly concluded, "here is some scandal for you my dear friend."[16] Like her peers, Isabella believed that marrying for love or sexual attraction was inherently funny.

Though there were always enough romantic attachments to provide new scandals, the merchants were slow to abandon their idea that one must be economically practical in marriage and in the family life that followed.[17] As Margaret Hunt has pointed out, family was the one institution that could be relied on in a generally unstable world.[18] The family always tried to protect its own.

Family responsibilities extended well beyond the nuclear family.[19] It seemed that there was always a sister who had married an improvident drunkard, or an orphaned child who needed a new home. George Nelson wrote to his friend Samuel Bellamy, "If you should go to Nottingham shortly should wish you to go as far as my Brother William Nelsons Children and Say out to the amot of Five Guineas and Charge it to my accot with you in Cloaths in such things as you may think they want most." He sadly added, "If you dont go your Self should not wish you to send it as perhaps the Children would not Git it."[20]

Mercantile families found occupations for as many of their members as was financially feasible. James Hamilton's partner in London, Hugh Bethune, was a relative through his wife's family. Other family members were involved in Hamilton's business enterprises in subordinate roles. Margaret Ramsay, Isabella Hamilton's aunt, and Margaret Kennedy, Isabella's cousin, both acted as housekeepers at Hamilton Plantation. James Paterson, the son of James Hamilton's sister, later served as overseer at St. Simons. None of the family members involved were troubled by the hierarchical implications of these tasks. It was natural that an impoverished aunt should end up as a housekeeper for her niece's plantation.[21]

While employing as many family members as possible ensured their financial support, a willingness to hire relatives regardless of their individual talents meant that one inept son could drag a whole family into disaster. Like many merchants in Charleston in the years after the Revolution, Robert Stewart sold too many goods to people who were unable to repay him. He owed money to his brothers, Walter and Hall. As he desperately wrote:

> gladly would I resign an existance, which is become loathsom to me, but never will I, if I can possibly help it, occation a blush to rise on the Cheek of any of my friends, for any action of mine, yet I cannot see any path, in which I can walk through Life, but such as are Covered with thorns & misfortune herself, in a thousand Different forms & shapes, stands in the way to intercept me.[22]

Robert died insane and penniless, leaving his wife with only the plantation she brought to the marriage and a few pieces of furniture. His brother believed that Robert had driven himself to this state and lamented, "How a Young man Educated and brought up as He was can disgrace Himself so much I am at a loss to account for."[23] But the traditional mercantile family continued to find employment for men like Robert. Employing family members was an unquestioned necessity.

The eighteenth-century and early nineteeth-century family was hierarchical and patriarchal. Mature but not elderly men led the family. In some cases, the family seems to have been led by one very successful individual; in others, power was shared among several men. Women and children were always subordinate, as were old men, young men, and unsuccessful men. In return for their money and their beneficence, the merchants received flattery, work, and obedience from the subordinate members of their families. Isabella Hamilton's letters to her husband, James, reveal a clever and competent woman who continually made gestures of submission to her husband's will. After making a suggestion about a business relationship, she immediately appended, parenthetically, "do not be offended with me."[24] Thoughts about the children were followed by the self-dismissive comment, "You will excuse this trifling your mind I know must be too much occupy'd to take any pleasure in it."[25] Isabella knew how dependent she was on the welfare and pleasure of her husband.

James Hamilton's father-in-law, Charles Steedman, because of his advanced age and relative poverty, was also subordinate to his son-in-law. In one letter, he explained that he hoped to use the debts that Hamilton would collect for him and money Hamilton had given him "to purchase furneture and sitt down in some little habitation or othere . . . not to be depending upon any of our frinds as I am rely sorrow that we have given you so much troble as your own Situation is too much for you to bear at present." Steedman saw no way out of his dependent situation, adding wistfully, "I hope that better times is awaiting."[26]

Strains developed as men aged out of their positions of influence or as young men contested with their elders for the leadership of the family.[27] Henry Laurens lost much of his vitality and optimism after his imprisonment in the Tower of London and the death of his favorite child, John. As he asked his sister-in-law and brother to return custody of his daughter to him, his lack of power made him unusually querulous. He resorted to playing on the emotions of his relatives in an attempt to get what he wanted: "Beware lest the time comes upon you, when ye shall say, 'verily

We have been guilty concerning our brother.'"[28] The petulant tone of his letter shows his weakness. In his younger days, his family obeyed his wishes without complaint.[29]

Reliability, integrity, and stability were valued more in a family member than a capacity to show demonstrative affection.[30] While separated from her husband for several months, Isabella Hamilton wrote him a series of letters in which she never told him that she loved him or that she missed him. She showed her affection for her husband by capably solving the family's problems, such as educating its young members.[31] Rebecca Gairdner's letters to her son, also named James, have a similar emotional tenor. In one letter, she discussed James's efforts to collect a remittance for a poor family; her son Edwin's debts and financial prospects; the flaws of the education of James's son, also named James; the recent naval successes of the British; and American trade policies. She called herself James's "affectionate Mother," but sensibility was nonexistent in her letter.[32]

Within these mercantile families, individuals were replaceable; status was paramount. This was particularly true of young children. It is difficult to imagine the friendship today that could survive George Nelson's comment, "I am very sorry to here of the Death of my Godson but it cannot be help'd the only way you can repair the loss is to set about & get a nother as soon a possible."[33] But Nelson's viewpoint was characteristic of an age that valued reliability and support more than love. Children grew more valuable as they grew older and their capabilities increased. Babies were replaceable.

Fundamentally, the traditional family rested on its capacity to compel obedience. Discipline could be harsh, as is revealed by Isabella Hamilton's letter about her daughter Agness (nicknamed Anne).

> We some days ago had a little falling out Isabella & her, had been picking flowrs, to prevent them doing it again I slapt tham arms & sent them up stairs. Anne could not rest untill she made her peace, at night on putting her to bed after saying her prayers she askt if I love'd her very much now, I told every body woud love her when she was good, says she you make me good, beating makes me good and I will never be naughty again.[34]

Agness learned that day that love was conditional on good behavior. Isabella's letter also reveals a family that was interested in external obedience rather than the heart's hidden impulses. Isabella did not attempt to reason with her daughter about picking the flowers. Agness learned that

if she disobeyed, she would be punished: "beating makes me good." It was more important for her not to step over the line than to understand why.[35]

The Business Role of Women

Very few letters from Charleston merchants' wives have survived.[36] However, we do know that they played a role in the family business, fostering the sociability that was the root of mercantile trade. This role gave them a voice, though a subordinate one, in how trade was conducted.

Some local merchants chose to marry or partner with African or African American women. Interracial relationships developed as a natural result of the trade between Europe, America, and Africa. By the seventeenth century in Africa, a thriving community of Atlantic creoles, the children of European fathers and African mothers, had developed.[37] Both cultures recognized the benefits of forming such relationships: goods could be exchanged, skills shared, and family extended past the bounds of nationality.[38]

In the 1790s, the New Yorker Joseph Hawkins came to Charleston to seek his fortune and wound up becoming supercargo on a slave ship. When he arrived in Africa, the captain of the ship entrusted him with a slaving trip to the Ebo people. According to Hawkins, the king of the Ebo insisted that Hawkins take two wives from among his subjects. Hawkins claims to have been initially resistant, but his wives, Yanee and Koomla, eventually won him over. Invariably pleasant and cheerful with him, they did his housework and taught him their language. They proved equally helpful when it came time to swap trade goods for slaves, for they "sincerely studied [his] interest," unlike Hawkins's guide, who sought his own profit. Yanee and Koomla even suggested that Hawkins could make some extra money by bringing his leftover goods back to the Ebo capital. When Hawkins left the two women, he promised to return to Africa and live with them again. He may have been sincere; when offered a job by a British factor on a nearby river, he realized that his "acquaintance with the *Ebo* king and people" and "the progress [he] had made in their language" would be tremendous assets to him.[39]

John Fraser's marriage resembled Hawkins's, in that Fraser gained valuable connections in Africa through his wife. Fraser was one of the slave traders who came to Charleston during the last few years the American slave trade with Africa was legal. He was married to an African woman named Phenda, with whom he had five children, all

of whom remained in Africa. Phenda Fraser had been previously married to another European trader. Perhaps part of her attractiveness as a wife was the connections she had fostered during her first marriage. But her husband appreciated her for more than her business talents. Fraser remarked that Phenda was "a woman of much Sensibility & of plain Talents who would not be despised in a Country where people of her Colour are admitted."[40] He admired her "sensibility"—her emotional perceptiveness—as much as her businesslike reliability.

The end of the transatlantic slave trade in 1808 made African women's connections less valuable to their American husbands. Like their white contemporaries, African women were pushed from the public world of business. Their partners continued to value them, however, for their contributions to the household (see chapter 6).

The role of white wives in the mercantile family is best shown in the letters Isabella Hamilton wrote to her husband, James. Primarily, Isabella spent her days in support of the family's social network. She backed her husband's business friendships with more personal activities. She cultivated connections within the extended family, making sure that everyone was settled where he or she could do the group as a whole the most economic good. Isabella's letters reinforced the values of friendship, family stability, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice.

Isabella brought her nieces Isabella Bethune and Jess Wilson back to America with her. In a letter to her husband, she explained why she had brought young Isabella:

> Poor Isabella Bethune, heart seem'd all most broke at the thought of parting with us and begs hard to take her with me I hope I am not encroaching too much in your liberality if I did suposeing her Father should concent to let her take her chance of Climate which I think he does not seem greatly averse to, I am far from pressing it you may supose but the poor thing herself seems to have it so much at heart, she say's she will live happy on St Simons upon Rice if I will but take her, and taking all things in View, she will be left in a very comfortless Situation for her father appears possitive in giving up house att present, that I feel much inclin'd t do it.[41]

Isabella's choice of language is particularly interesting. She pleads her niece's case in the same manner as her niece had begged her. She uses phrases that demonstrate deference to her husband's will, such as "I hope I am not encroaching too much in your liberality" and "I am far from pressing it." At the same time, echoes of the niece's self-abasement before

her aunt come through in the older Isabella's description of the younger woman's pitiable state. Young Isabella's "heart seem'd all most broke"; she is a "poor thing." Here we see at last the language of sensibility—from the mouth of the family's weakest member.[42] The lines of deference and condescension are very apparent. To make a request for James's attention requires great flattery on the part of both Isabellas. However, all parties involved wish for young Isabella to be happy. Isabella Hamilton's family valued the happiness of its members, at least when that happiness could be provided without draining the family's resources and might eventually contribute to the family's common good. Happiness and affection were stabilizing, calming agents; anger was abhorrent because it was destructive.

Still, happiness and affection should be set aside when the family's greater good demanded it. Isabella brought two of her nieces to America with her when she rejoined her husband, but she left her daughter, Agness, in Britain with her parents. She regretted leaving Agness behind but stifled her affectionate impulses because she was convinced that she was doing the right thing; more important, her husband felt that the best thing was to leave her daughter behind.[43] The girl could more properly be educated in either England or Scotland. Furthermore, the Hamiltons had apparently once had another child, a little boy, who had died in America. They did not want to risk a second child in the dangerous air of St. Simons. Finally, Isabella felt that Agness's presence would be good for her parents. Agness would be a replacement for herself: "it seem'd to be making up for my leaving them in the prospect of having the charge of her."[44] This suggests that a broad range of adult family members were considered competent to raise a child; circumstances other than parentage would determine where a child was placed.[45] Isabella might have felt justified in her choice on seeing her daughter's later success. Agness married an extremely wealthy Philadelphian, Francis Porteus Corbin. In Isabella's mind, such a marriage probably would have been a benefit to the whole family.

Beyond reinforcing the hierarchical framework of her family, by properly training and caring for its younger members, Isabella's major role was to support the social networks that composed the business world.[46] Isabella brought some of her husband's business connections with her as a wedding gift, such as her husband's partner, Hugh Bethune, and the two women who worked on Hamilton Plantation. After the marriage, Isabella had an important role in sustaining the personal side of her family's business networks. For example, she invited three members of the

Storr family to a dance on Christmas Day. Meanwhile, James received business letters from Thomas Storr in Savannah.[47]

Isabella clearly felt that her work gave her some authority in determining whether these relationships should continue. She praised one of her husband's associates for being socially considerate and mocked another for being stiff and unfriendly: "Mr. Gray has been uncommonly and feelingly attentive your friend Greenwood has din'd once by particular invitation and call'd once this you will say is no great disappointment."[48] Her comments to her husband assume a shared interpretation of the business friendship that valued cordiality as much as mercantile competence.

The business friendship that especially engaged Isabella was the one with the Couper family. John Couper and James Hamilton had been involved in business since the late 1780s and had bought land together on St. Simons Island in Georgia in 1793.[49] The two families were quite close; the Coupers had a son named James Hamilton Couper, born in 1794.[50] After a hurricane in 1804, Hamilton's examination of his business led him to conclude that Couper was mismanaging his affairs. Isabella begged her husband not to lose his temper with Couper: "I can not express to you the uneasiness I feel at your communications with Mr. Couper for God sake consider his good intentions (do not be offended with me) weigh every thing well before you speak one word of the late transactions."[51] She pleaded with James to put the best possible construction on his partner's actions in order to preserve the relationship.

> Mr Couper's speckulations have been imprudent & very unfortunate but beleive if possible that the intention was good__ for should we deprive ourselves of affectionate friends by contentions of this nature ah my dear Mr. Hamilton what forlorn creatures we are possest of all the affluence of this world__but I have said enough of this I know it will be your endeavour to do every thing that appears to you just & proper.[52]

Note that Isabella immediately undercut the directness of her suggestion by stating that her husband would certainly behave correctly. She would never allow herself to appear as if she were giving orders to her husband. Normally, she acted more circuitously. As the dispute with Couper continued, she slyly informed her husband that she had had their daughter christened—and given her the middle name Rebecca, after Mrs. Couper.[53] What better way to remind her husband of the deep ties the Hamiltons and Coupers shared?

It is also noteworthy that Isabella did not attempt to defend the continuation of the friendship on business grounds. She corroborated her husband's opinion that Couper's actions had been "imprudent." However, she believed that the business "friendship" was about more than economic success. She feared the loss of the Coupers' affections; she feared "contentions" that would destabilize the interpersonal network and leave the Hamiltons lost and "forlorn." What is perhaps surprising is that James seemed to feel the same way. Couper eventually became so indebted to James that he gave him all of his property and other assets, except for his lands on St. Simons and a hundred slaves, in exchange for James paying off his remaining creditors. James then sold half of one of the plantations to Couper's son for about half its market value.[54] The friendship was saved; a final token of this was the daughter, born about a decade later, who was named Isabella Hamilton Couper.

While always deferential to her husband, Isabella's letters reinforced middle-class values within the family. In Isabella's mind, the world was an unpredictable place, with economic disaster and catastrophic illness always lurking. She had taught herself to be ready for privation. But she felt she could avoid the interpersonal disturbances that threatened the network of friends and family, the only source of stability in life. So she made sure all the family's children were settled and productive, and she protected her family's fragile friendships. She flattered her husband to keep him in good temper and slapped her daughter into obedience. For Isabella, calmness and good order were more appealing than displays of affection; they were, in fact, the way she showed love.

Was Isabella Hamilton typical? Her activities are far better documented than those of any other Charleston merchant's wife. However, her work in rearing all the children of her family was apparently common. Josiah Smith's wife reared her younger brother, William Stevens. Smith wrote that his brother-in-law was "brought up by her from his Infancy" and "consequently as dear to us as an own Son."[55]

Other letters from merchants in Charleston suggest that Isabella's role as "corporate wife" was a widespread one. In their husbands' letters, wives offered greetings to their husbands' correspondents and their spouses. Gifts traveled along with business letters. Husbands often gave local produce, while their wives' gifts were commonly described as the work of their own hands. Henry Laurens wrote that his wife was "at present cutting up a fine Pumpkin," which she apparently made into a pot of "Pumpkin Sweatmeat."[56] These gift exchanges are a sign of the wives' larger work in sustaining the family's interpersonal networks.

Men also helped educate children and maintain connections with friends. What was distinctive about women's role? Despite her obvious intelligence and competence, Isabella was always subordinate to her husband. Unlike the young male members of the family, she would never grow to become a challenge to his authority; she would always be an obedient agent of his will. She attempted to inculcate the same values of obedience and self-sacrifice in her niece and daughter. Isabella would have agreed with Catherine Beecher's theory that the willing subordination of women brought necessary order to society.[57]

Yet for Isabella, being subordinate to James did not mean she was powerless. She believed that a good wife should also be a tactful counselor. Isabella's letters suggest that women had a special role in maintaining the family's relationship with its friends. By naming her daughter for Rebecca Couper, she told her husband—and the Coupers—that the relationship between the two families extended beyond the countinghouse and the wharves and into the nursery of the next generation. She deepened the meaning of business friendships by making them almost familial.

Conclusion

The giddy years after the Revolution promoted a business culture in which fraud was rampant. Merchants sought a safety net in two kinds of relationships: their emotionally rich friendships with other male merchants and their extended families, which provided stability. The wives of mercantile families had an important if subordinate role in sustaining these relationships as well. Mercantile families agreed that secure relationships justified short-term business losses.

Feminist history has reminded us that the distinction between "home" and "work" is an artificial one and that women were central to the household's economic survival. But this blurring of roles should also remind us that the cultural work of making the middle class happened in the countinghouse as well as the parlor, and among men as well as women. Sociability, reliability, and sympathy were middle-class characteristics cultivated by male merchants in the uneasy world of the early republic.

5 / The War of 1812 and Commercial Disaster

American merchants in general were not happy about the War of 1812, and Charlestonians were no exception. At the beginning of the war, Thomas Henry Hindley wrote, "This war is the worst thing which cou'd have happened here [in Charleston], as it has taken away all resources."[1] In 1807, there were 472 merchants listed in the Charleston city directory. By 1813, only 247 were listed. As the war continued, it became clear how much prewar prosperity depended on a unique set of geopolitical circumstances. Some of the prewar branches of mercantile enterprise would never recover.

Nor would the image of the Charleston merchant. Americans like to blame economic busts on speculators and outsiders. In South Carolina, planters increasingly described the mercantile middle class as a group of deceitful, immoral strangers. Charleston's commercial collapse shaped stereotypes about merchants throughout the antebellum South. The middle class would find it difficult to fight its portrayal as an alien parasite in the plantation paradise.

The Declining Spanish Empire

The War of 1812 in the North centered on the competition for land around the eastern Great Lakes between the British, Tecumseh's Native American confederacy, and the Americans. "In many ways, the South fought its own War of 1812," and that war was centered on Florida.[2]

Historians have questioned whether American efforts in the Floridas should be considered part of the War of 1812, partly because they began before war was declared; it is probably fair to say that both the attempt to expand American territory in the North and the more successful land grabs in the South were made possible because of the Napoleonic challenge to the European imperial powers.[3]

The decline of the Spanish Empire was central to determining the course of the Southern war. In 1800, the Treaty of San Idelfonso ceded Spanish Louisiana to France, which then sold the territory to the Americans. In 1808, Napoleon removed the Spanish king and replaced him with his brother, Joseph Bonaparte. British and American observers rightly believed that Spain's clasp on its empire was weakening, or, as Henry Adams memorably wrote, "England and the United States, like two vultures, hovered over the expiring empire, snatching at the morsels they most coveted."[4]

As I discussed in chapter 3, several Latin American ports opened to American merchants as the Spanish Empire weakened. Charleston's merchants traded in Amelia Island, Havana, and Vera Cruz, with varying levels of legality. News of Latin American independence movements filled the newspapers. In general, observers in the United States celebrated the spread of free trade and democracy; more alarming were the signs that Spanish territory was ripe for conquest by outside forces, either freebooters or emissaries of European nations. In early 1807, a Charleston merchant wrote a New York–based trading partner that New Orleans was under embargo and braced for an attack by Aaron Burr: "on the 9th Decr. General Wilkinson in a public speech told the merchants that Mexico was the main object but New Orleans was to be first attacked and plundered to furnish supplies."[5] In actuality, Wilkinson was lying. Burr did hope to stage a filibuster in Mexico, but no such action was imminent, and he had no plans to take American territory.[6]

The federal government was especially worried about the English conquering formerly Spanish territory. To prevent British incursions, the U.S. government promoted pro-American rebellion in West Florida, enabling it to be taken over by the United States in 1810. Congress then allowed the federal government to take charge of the rest of Florida if there were signs that the British might attempt to conquer it.[7]

Gen. George Mathews decided to take more aggressive tactics than Congress had permitted and promoted a rebellion in Spanish East Florida. The first success of the "Patriots" was the capture of Amelia Island and its city, Fernandina, on March 17, 1812. But after a long slog through

the rest of Florida, the Patriots were unable to conquer St. Augustine, and American backing collapsed. Amelia Island was returned to the Spanish on May 8, 1813. Briefly conquered by the British in May of the following year, Amelia Island spent the rest of the war in Spanish hands.[8] In 1817, the island was conquered by two separate supporters of Spanish American independence, then became an American possession.[9]

Because of the importance of Amelia Island as a way station for the cotton trade, war in Florida was much on the minds of Charleston's merchants. James Hamilton received frequent updates on the situation from his friend Zephaniah Kingsley, a Patriot, and the more ambivalent John Couper in Georgia.[10] Couper's letters detailed fears that the conflict would spread north.[11] For Couper, the primary concern as the war dragged on was that respect for political authority seemed to be degenerating. Twice he quoted Judges 21:25: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."[12] During the war years, from one angle, America seemed to have the possibility of expansion; from the other, America was disintegrating at the edges.

International Trade

In general, the War of 1812 was not kind to trade. Staple crops accumulated in ports, their prices dropping. In August 1813, upland cotton cost less than half in Charleston of what it sold for in Boston. Rice would have brought four times as much in Philadelphia as it did in Charleston—if a merchant could only get it there. American trade restrictions and the successful British blockade both harmed American shippers.[13] Ultimately, the war would shift the patterns of American trade.

Neutral trading was, by definition, ended by American entry into the War of 1812 but probably began tapering off before the war, due to British and French attacks on American vessels. Statistics from Timothy Pitkin show reexports of foreign goods from South Carolina dropping after 1807, from $3,783,199 in 1807 to $260,402 in 1808 and $1,428 in 1814.[14] Christopher Fitzsimons, who had been an active neutral trader, wrote in early 1811 that he was no longer working as a merchant.[15] He was concentrating on working his plantations, exporting his own cotton and that of his friend, Wade Hampton, and directing a local bank.

In 1815, a Charleston merchant complained, "Several Charleston Houses were formerly engaged in shipping Dry goods, to the West Indies, and frequently the Spaniards carried away to a considerable amount, but this is now at an end."[16] Merchants throughout the United

States were making the same discovery; the neutral trade had been a transient source of income, but it would not do for the long term.[17] As Adam Seybert wrote in 1818:

> Temporary benefits were mistaken for permanent advantages; so certain were the profits on the foreign voyages, that commerce was only pursued as an art; all the knowledge, which former experience had considered as essentially necessary, was now unattended to; the philosophy of commerce, if I am allowed the expression, was totally neglected; the nature of foreign productions was but little investigated by the shippers in the United States; the demand in Europe for foreign merchandise, especially for that of the West Indies and South America, secured to all these cargoes a ready sale, with a great profit. The most adventurous became the most wealthy, and that without the knowledge of any of the principles which govern commerce under ordinary circumstances.

In other words, the years before the War of 1812 had been a bonanza for the reckless cowboy capitalists, but that was about to change. Seybert reminded his readers that the years of the European wars were in no way typical for American commerce and suggested that most Americans should turn from being merchants to mechanics and manufacturers, "instead of vesting our hopes on a fallacious intercourse with foreign nations."[18]

The prospects for cotton exports were equally ugly. An initial problem was the decline in credit from British houses, which antedated the war. Liverpool cotton importers were hit with a round of bankruptcies in early 1811, the effects of which hurt American cotton exporters, particularly in the North. Fitzsimons noticed a "vast number of failures in New York" and worried that "some of our Merchants that have been shipping to England and drawing bills will suffer."[19] Hindley & Gregorie thought the cause was closer to home: the closure of the Bank of the United States had destroyed the market for discounting bills on England, regardless of the stability of the British merchant on whom the bill was drawn.[20] Men who had bought cotton using British credit now had no way to reimburse themselves.

Hindley & Gregorie was one of the firms destroyed shortly before the war, when their friend in Liverpool stopped paying their drafts. Their cotton purchasers in Liverpool attempted to cancel their orders when the price of cotton dropped, and when they learned that the orders had already been executed, refused to pay for the cotton. After making a

settlement with his creditors, Hindley was able to return to business, but Gregorie retired from trade.[21]

A second source of difficulty was getting the cotton to Europe. While England was the enemy and thus legally off-limits, it was possible to ship cotton to France. In January 1813, a Charleston merchant reported that several ships were loading for Bordeaux and Nantes and that he himself hoped to send a cargo to Nantes.[22] However, shippers headed for France faced the problem of the British blockade of the United States. But John Stoney explained that this blockade was not complete: "The enemy's Cruisers on this Station Suffer, Neutral vessels, and those bearing the American flag with *their protections*, to pass in and out unmolested."[23] These "protections" were trading licenses sold by the British government, which were illegal for Americans to carry under American law.[24]

Shipping illegally to Britain was even more difficult. James Hamilton received a letter from a friend in Savannah in late 1812, lamenting the situation: "What we are to do with our Cotton I am at a loss to say. If we were to ship in Swedish Vessels, I doubt if England would suffer an entry. And if shipped as American property they would seize it; if as British, it would be subject to seizure by our Cruisers__ Were it shipped to Sweden, the Markets are uncertain and insurance will be high."[25]

Charleston's problem—that the enemy had been its major trading partner before the war—was compounded by turbulence in Florida. During the Embargo and the Non-Importation Act, Amelia Island had been a major center of smuggling cotton to England. How its capture by the Patriots affected its status is unclear, but it probably made the port less friendly to British ships, as when two ships from Nassau were taken prisoner.[26] Smuggling to Britain probably continued through shippers of other nations. A merchant from Savannah wrote in 1813 that he was loading ships at Amelia from Russia and Sweden.[27] The same merchant complained in late 1814, "An extensive Trade would in these times be driven at Amelia, but the occasional visits from British Cruizers operate as a considerable damper."[28] We can probably assume that Amelia Island during the War of 1812 was not the friendly gateway to Great Britain that it had been before the war.

A final difficulty was Mother Nature. Stoney complained in August 1813 that a "dreadful" rain had severely damaged the cotton crop. Less than half of a "fair" crop of fine cotton was likely to be made, and the uplands crop—already reduced by the planters' decision to grow wheat rather than cotton—was similarly damaged by the weather.[29]

Cotton exports directly from Charleston dropped dramatically during the war. South Carolina's exports of U.S.-grown produce declined

sharply between 1811 and 1814.[30] James Hamilton paid daily wharfage on his ship, the *Savannah*, from January 1813 to March 1815.[31] Apparently, it wasn't worthwhile to bring it out of port.

The Rise of State Banking

The War of 1812 brought renewed disorder to the federal government's finances. Most of the nation's funding came from taxes on external trade, and the combination of federally mandated embargoes and British-imposed blockades decreased the nation's income and drove the government into debt. Furthermore, Congress had refused to renew the charter of the Bank of the United States, and the federal government was forced to turn to state banks to borrow money. Wartime debt and the lack of a strong central bank led to a boom in state banking that unfortunately proved dangerous after the war.

Charleston's merchants became heavily involved in banking as a refuge from the trade problems. Charlestonians had been great supporters, in general, of the Bank of the United States. How vigorous this support could be became apparent during an incident in the late summer of 1811. On August 24, 1811, the Branch Bank was "robbed of 28 and an half boxes of Gold and Silver coin, containing 135,713 dollars and 18 cents in value."[32] Like a posse, the men of Charleston swarmed the streets at night, hoping to keep the money from being taken out of town. The thief was soon discovered—a man named Benjamin Grey, who had hidden the money in his yard, "under a quantity of manure, straw, &c," along with a lantern and "the false keys, with which the Bank is supposed to have been entered."[33]

Four days after the thief was captured, Adam Gilchrist, president of the bank, thanked the community for keeping a close watch on Grey until enough evidence could be collected to arrest him. Gilchrist added:

> None who entertained a just sense of the high importance of character to a large commercial city, and of the inviolable security of monied institutions, whereupon depends the sole property of so many thousands of helpless widows and orphans and charitable societies, none feeling with poignant sensibility that a foul blot was cast on the fair fame of Charleston, could sit down quietly under the obloquy which the escape and impunity of the robber, with the fruits of his villainy, might forever fasten upon it.

Gilchrist's rhetoric not only allies the bank's welfare with the needs of its most innocent investors but also feminizes the city it serves. Charleston

has honor that must be protected from insult. To extend the metaphor, the bank is like the city's husband, whose task is to provide "inviolable security" to the weaker spouse. The "commercial city" is feminine—fertile and productive under a man's care but always susceptible to "blots" on her honor—while the bank is male—rational, giving security through strength and stability. But who is to protect the "widow" and "orphan" (always the most sympathetic shorthand for "investor") when the husband is lost? The men of Charleston would be her champions:

> you rose in your strength, you spread yourselves in every direction, you ransacked every avenue which might lead to the exposure of the offender, and by your active zeal and perseverance you have laid open the recesses of his deep laid villainy—You have so far succeeded—you have rescued your country from reproach and you have restored to its ancient solidity an indispensible pillar of publick confidence and private security.[34]

The city's matronly honor had been restored and the bank brought back to its customary masculine potency by the vigorous efforts of an armed male populace. That, at least, was the way Gilchrist imagined the story of the bank. But, ironically, the bank, this "pillar of publick confidence and private security," had already lost its "ancient solidity" long before the robbery.

All the branches of the Bank of the United States were supposed to have been closed in March 1811, five months before Grey's robbery. However, by September 1813, about $950,000 in assets from across the country still could not be liquidated. Of these uncollectable debts, about $413,000, or 43 percent, were due to the Charleston branch. According to the bank historian James Wettereau, the source of the problem was not that the bank lent to bad risks but rather the wartime problems facing Charleston's merchants.[35]

But Wettereau was only partly correct. The downturn was not the only source of the Charleston branch's difficulties. When they were informed that the national bank was closing, the directors of each city's branch attempted to balance two responsibilities: respect the wishes of the national bank and support local merchants. Charleston's branch bank may have been slower to wind up its affairs than other branches because its directors thought its continued existence was critical to the local economy. When Charleston's board of directors were told to close the bank, they instead obtained legal counsel, saying, "The notice customary when Notes are lodged in the Bank . . . appears . . . to be quite

sufficient to preserve the Branch Bank in all its rights." The directors resolved that "the business of the Bank with its customers, except as to discounts, be conducted as usual for the present."[36] In New Orleans, on the other hand, the local directors called in all current loans in installments, which enabled them to successfully shut the branch without endangering the health of the local mercantile community.[37] Unlike New Orleans, Charleston was caught with a large amount of uncollectable debt when the war started; it would have been easier to close the bank in 1811 than in 1813.

With the Bank of the United States essentially gone, the number of state banks multiplied during the War of 1812. The historian Joseph Van Fenstermaker calculated that the number of state banks rose sharply after the Bank of the United States closed, despite the war (Graph 5.1). Paid-in bank capital also continued to rise during the war, indicating that these banks were well used.[38]

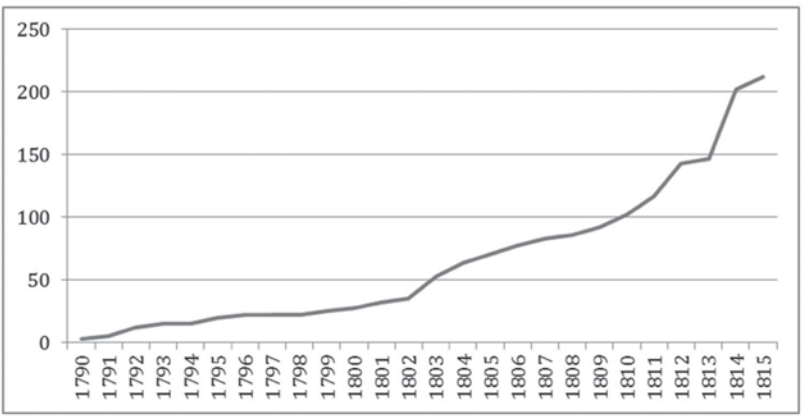
Just before the start of the war, Christopher Fitzsimons detailed the value of the South Carolina banks for the Philadelphia merchant and banking mogul Stephen Girard, beginning with the Bank of South Carolina, of which Fitzsimons was a director.

> The Oldest Bank here is the Bank of So Carolina . . . the original Subscription shares of this Bank was forty dollars each in a few years after its etablishment it was thought proper to Augment the Capital from three hundred thousand dollars to Six hundred and seventy 5 thousand and these last shares was filled at forty five dollars each allowing five dollars for fixtures and surplus & & this Stock is now sold at eighty dollars per share and has been sold as high as eighty fivive dollars per share. The annual dividend has been from 12 pr to 15 percent on the original subscription and has a surplus Capital of about two hundred thousand dollars and a house and land that cost about Sixty thousand dollars.

Despite the great success of his bank, Fitzsimons was not satisfied: "This institution would have done much better had it not been oppressed by the branch bank having the deposits of the money of the U States."

Fitzsimons reported positively on two new banks. The Union Bank "has been established about two years and so far has been judiciously managed Capital Ten hundred thousand Dollars divided 8 Percent per annum stock at par." The Planters' and Mechanics' Bank had been in operation about a year and had "Capital Ten hundred thousand dollars . . . and its stock at 10 per cent below par." The older State Bank was

Graph 5.1. Number of State Banks, 1790–1815



Source: From Van Fenstermaker, "The Statistics of American Commercial Banking, 1782–1818," 401.

a more complicated story, due to its partial state ownership. This bank "has a Capital of eight hundred thousand dollars five hundred thousand dollars individual subscription and three hundred thousand dollars by the State which I Consider a bad partner as our legislature often makes a bad choice of directors This Bank has divided 8 per cent per annum generally and its stock about 28 p cent above par."[39] Fitzsimons was more forthcoming in a letter to a different friend, saying that "no bank in this city . . . has been worse conducted or made worse dividends than the state Bank except the Branch Bank of the United States."[40]

In general, Fitzsimons was very positive about the prospects, stability, and dividends of South Carolina's banks. Only the newest bank had stock trading below par, and the two older banks yielded high dividends. As he indicated, the public-private hybrid nature of the State Bank suited no one; it resulted in the privatization of the State Bank and the creation of the Bank of the State of South Carolina in 1812.[41] This new bank differed from the others in being wholly state sponsored and originally intended to assist planters rather than merchants.[42]

Fitzsimons seems to have been correct in his analysis that Charleston's banks were well run and stable. Treasury secretary Albert Gallatin claimed that bank notes were worth 93 cents on the dollar in Charleston, the same as they were in New York, as compared to 75 to 80 cents in Baltimore and Washington.[43] According to the historian Bray Hammond,

"South Carolina had no serious banking difficulties and no bank failures till the collapse of the Confederate authority in 1865."[44]

Successful merchants throughout the nation, like Stephen Girard in Philadelphia, turned to banking as their primary occupation for the duration of the War of 1812. This was certainly true in Charleston, where, in 1812, 44 percent of the bank officers listed in Charleston's city directory were merchants.[45] In this, they were much like their predecessors in the years immediately after the Revolution, like Josiah Smith, who found banking a more secure occupation than trade.

Although in most ways the War of 1812 damaged Charleston's commercial prospects, it did have a large benefit: it caused the creation of several local banks. Many historians have pointed out that the war promoted industrial development by forcing wealthy merchants to invest in businesses other than international trade. Similarly, it promoted the growth of the nation's financial system, the impersonal networks of means that would shape trade after the war.

Merchants and Strangers

Historians agree that merchants were not always viewed negatively in South Carolina. Through the Revolution, they were some of the most powerful members of the local government—though of course, like all Americans, their colonial authority was much less respected on the other side of the Atlantic. Men like Henry Laurens, inspired by British writers who flattered the middle class for its cosmopolitanism and practicality, believed that even though a merchant could never be a member of the aristocracy, he could be refined into gentility by his occupation.[46] His postwar peers were less interested in refinement than in getting ahead, and their neighbors in Charleston noticed.

References to merchants as members of a distinct middle class—and of this class being less worthy and refined than the planter elite—multiplied around the War of 1812. E. S. Thomas claimed that in 1795, "Charleston was the most aristocratic city in the Union. . . . The door of the '*St. Cecelia Society*' was shut to the plebian and the man of business, with . . . two exceptions."[47] One visiting diarist wrote in 1809 that "the planters consider themselves much above the merchants,"[48] a sentiment embodied in Hugh Legaré's later comment, "The *town bourgeoisie* is *so* odious! . . . Alfred Huger's remark always occurs to me, that the greatest absurdity in the world is a 'Liverpool Gentleman.'"[49] Henry Gourdin, a

planter's son, felt uncomfortable in the "civilization of the life" of the retail trader who was his first master.

> Their sitting room, dining and breakfast room were one, and opened immediately into the store. To be put to bed at night on a mattress dumped upon the floor of this room when the family had retired, and stirred up in the morning by the broom of the house maid of all work to prepare it for breakfast, was . . . "tight lines" for one born and nurtured [in the planter class].[50]

Refinement, as Gourdin knew, demanded separation of the social and functional spaces of the house into parlor and kitchen. The visible presence of work was not genteel. Furthermore, a gentleman required private space to prepare to be sociable.[51] Most merchants accepted that they were not elegant. Thomas Smith wrote that unlike the "fashionable people" who attended parties and flirted with ladies, "we of Manchester Hall do not . . . rank as fashionable, confining our attention too exclusively to Cotton Bags & our visits to the Wharves."[52] Merchants saw themselves as too awkward and rough for the genteel social sphere, and the local planter elite agreed.

Why did planters decide they were superior to the merchants who had previously been their peers? Charleston's planters accurately claimed that trade was debasing, and they were probably also correct to impugn the morality of the postrevolutionary merchants in comparison to their more staid colonial predecessors. Postrevolutionary merchants knew that at least two types of business were only temporary—the slave trade ceased in 1808, and the neutral trade came to an end with American entry into the war—and entered into them with a frenzy that belied ethics and good judgment.

Nevertheless, planters were not disinterested parties. By removing the British "de jure" aristocracy from the top ranks of the social world, the Revolution made room for local "de facto" aristocracies.[53] The descendants of the men who looked longingly at London—only to find, if they ever visited, that they were considered ridiculous parvenus—made themselves the apex of the American social scene. Great wealth, political control, and the stability that came from the intermarriage of a small number of families constituted the primary sources of the planters' power. As one observer wrote, Charleston's social leaders were a "few old patrician families, into which 'novi homines,' unless distinguished by great personal merit, find it extremely difficult to gain admission." But the planters also wished to believe that their status rested on their inherent

aristocratic qualities. Like other postrevolutionary elites, planters sought to consolidate their social power through claims to refinement: "travel (especially travel to Europe), education, manners, and mastery of genteel skills such as dance and dress."[54] The luxurious homes and artworks that these men acquired advertised their elegant taste and intellect. As Frederick Law Olmstead wrote, "There is less vulgar display, and more intrinsic elegance, and habitual mental refinement in the best society of South Carolina, than in any distinct class anywhere among us." Another British visitor praised them as "a genuine aristocracy."[55] Charleston's merchants—precursors of the age of Barnum—were increasingly out of place in this self-consciously genteel world.

Historians have found many ways that the Southern elite distinguished itself from the middle class. Elites upheld honor culture, rejecting Christian-inspired morality, self-control, and self-discipline.[56] But in South Carolina it may have been gentility that became the most important fault line between merchants and planters. Charleston's elite maligned mercantile behavior less because it was dishonorable than because it was inelegant.[57]

Furthermore, planters benefited from making economic turmoil and the resumption of the slave trade someone else's fault: strangers. These "foreign" merchants were believed to be un-Southern in their behavior. According to Frank Byrne's study, antebellum North and South Carolina newspapers identified merchants as following "cunning Yankee practices" and "values alien to Dixie" that risked disrupting the community. Newspapers commonly contained stories of predatory merchants who cheated naive customers.[58] While analysis of the city directories shows that most merchants were strangers to Charleston, Charlestonians emphasized their foreign behavior because that meant that economic misjudgments could be placed at the feet of outsiders.

The temporary revival of the international slave trade also decreased merchants' status. The more Charleston's planters could make the responsibility for the slave trade's magnitude either foreign or Northern in origin, the more morally pure they themselves would appear to be. Even after the international slave trade was banned, Charlestonians continued to insist on the primary culpability of foreign merchants. Senator William Loughton Smith told the Senate in 1820 that most slave-trading merchants were British or Yankees. He added, "Those [New England] people who most deprecate the evils of slavery and traffic in human flesh, when a profitable market can be found, can sell human flesh with as easy a conscience as they sell other articles."[59] One visitor was told in the

mid-1820s, "There was formerly a considerable trade in slaves carried on from Charleston, most however by foreigners."[60] As I discussed in chapter 3, this is inaccurate; slave-trading merchants were more likely to have long tenures in Charleston than non-slave-trading merchants, probably because of the amount of wealth necessary to engage in that trade.

Though the slave traders were purportedly "foreigners" who had left town, Charlestonians had a superstition about their children.

> It was a common saying in Charleston, that "the curse of God stuck to all slave-traders and their children," who never prospered finally. There seemed to be one, and I was told only one, exception to this rule, in the person of a very benevolent gentleman, the son of a slave trader. But during my residence in South Carolina, this exception ceased to exist; for the person alluded to failed in business, and "the curse" at last fell upon him.[61]

Contradictions to this "curse," such as Nathaniel Russell, Adam Tunno, and Christopher Fitzsimons, all of whom died wealthy, are easy to find. Fitzsimons, for example, married one of his daughters to Wade Hampton's son and another (unfortunately) to James Henry Hammond. But apparently ashamed of their slave-trading past, Charlestonians wished to make transgressions disappear, as if by the hand of God. At the same time that mercantile practices became most embarrassing, the middle class vanished from the mental map of elite Charleston.

As a leader of cultural thought in the antebellum South, Charleston's bias against merchants shaped the status of the middle class throughout the Cotton Empire.[62] For example, Byrne has pointed out that the idea that "most merchants operating in the South hailed from Europe and the North—that they were 'Jews' and 'Yankees'" was a "commonly held misconception."[63] While the stereotype failed to fit most of the antebellum South, it reflects the increasingly diverse mercantile population of Charleston, as seen in Table 3.3 and Graph 3.1. A bias against foreign merchants, based on a desire to seem aristocratic, a reaction to a particular economic bubble, and the controversial status of the slave trade in antebellum America, shaped the treatment of the middle class throughout the antebellum South.

Ironically, Charleston's merchants may have been too aggressive, even by Northern standards. There are hints in letters from Northern merchants that their Southern counterparts had let their ambition injure their long-term career prospects. In short, Southern merchants were untrustworthy. The influential merchant Stephen Girard received a

"false package of cotton" from Charleston. "It is greatly to be lamented," remarked his local correspondent, "that the baseness, and cupidity of individuals should thus be the cause of throwing a Stigma on the country to which they belong, but it has ever been so, and so long as men have the power to defraud, there will, unhappily be found too many disposed for the attempt."[64] A Philadelphia merchant wrote to a young man who had been working in Savannah, "I believe you to be a good young man, and when you leave Newyork, throw off: all Southern habits, forget them." Instead of being "Southern," the young merchant should "persevere" and "be patient."[65] In the coming years, the swashbuckling middle-class virtues from before the War of 1812 lost their value. The ideal merchant of the antebellum years would be very different.

Conclusion

The War of 1812 shut down most forms of trade. Thanks to the British blockade, shipping cotton to Britain's mills was problematic even for the most determined smuggler. Merchants turned instead to banking, creating a cadre of locally based, commercially focused institutions that would continue to prosper even after the war. In the queasy years of the war came the backlash against merchants' behavior, both from local planter and Northern trading partners. During the postwar cotton boom, merchants would have to remake their behavior and values to appeal to a new set of customers.

6 / Mercantile Professionalism and Charleston as a Cotton Port

Previous generations of historians believed that Charleston's culture was a drawback to economic development. As William Pease and Jane Pease wrote, "Boston's chief economic resource in 1843, as it had been in 1828 or 1780, was her people—their skills, their talents, their commitment to work. But a slave labor force and its attendant culture denied Charleston the same rich endowment." Charlestonian society "fostered attitudes at odds with the work ethic."[1] In other words, Charlestonians were lazy, which is why Charleston declined as a port. But if this were the case, where did Charleston's earlier boom come from? Where historians like the Peases made their mistake was focusing their cultural analysis on the period after 1820 and extrapolating it into the past—which is sort of like saying that Detroit was never a center of automotive innovation, based on a study of the city in the 1980s. As we have seen, before the Revolution and for about two decades after 1790, Charleston was an innovative and thriving port, filled with ambitious, hard-driving, even cutthroat young merchants.

Edward Baptist would argue that this historiographical glitch is an effect of considering the culture of the Old South as an unchanging constant. One of the successes of the new history of capitalism is that it explains what would otherwise be confusing—the rise and fall of mercantile power in old slave state ports like Charleston. Charleston was part of a global trade network that changed over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as cotton cultivation spread, the Americas sought

local rule, and politics put some ports off-limits and opened others. Economics, not culture, was the reason for Charleston's relative decline.

This chapter considers why Charleston was such a poor place for merchants after the war even though the cultivation of cotton continued to grow. Merchants' power in society, as demonstrated in their governmental and social participation, also generally declined. Nevertheless, though disparaged by the planter elite, Charleston's merchants continued to develop their own middle-class identity. In these years, they took on many of the attributes typical of the antebellum middle class, Northern or Southern. Looking at Charleston's merchants in the decade and a half before 1830 helps us consider what—if not Southern laziness—was distinctive about the Southern middle class. How did "a slave labor class and its attendant culture" make Charleston different?

Postwar Boom and Bust

As it did after the Revolution, Charleston's economy underwent a bubble of economic optimism after the War of 1812. Only 247 merchants were listed in Charleston's city directory in 1813. By 1819, this number had spiked to 429, but this brief revival ended in the Panic of the same year. Over the next decade, the number of merchants would decline to an alarmingly small 173, fewer than had been in business during the war. As these numbers suggest, the 1820s were a miserable decade to be a merchant in Charleston; only in the 1830s were merchants touched by the pre–Civil War cotton-driven revival (Table 6.1). As shown in Table 3.3, Charleston's merchants increasingly had English surnames after the War of 1812; the population spike in 1819 drew on a less diverse group of merchants than the one in 1807.

The brief postwar surge had different causes from the economic boom before the War of 1812. The majority of the businesses that had driven the prewar boom years disappeared. The American role in trade between the West Indies and Europe did not revive after the war.[2] Though I have found no statistics for reexports from Charleston, they do exist for the nation in general (Table 6.2).

Through 1833, reexports never regained the heights of the pre–War of 1812 years. One of the reasons for this decline may have been merchants' fear of privateers and pirates. A correspondent in Haiti in 1819 complained that "the growing piracy which is carried on from the leeward coast of this island, say from Arquin Bay to the West End, and from thence through the Passage and the Keys, as well as round Cuba: this piracy, has been going

Table 6.1. Number of Merchants Listed in the Charleston Directory, 1813-1835

Year	*Number of Merchants*
1813	247
1819	429
1822	355
1825	214
1829	173
1835	223

on, for these five years, and is now grown to an alarming extent, so much so, that it is dangerous for any unarmed vessel to pass."[3] The continuing disintegration of the Spanish Empire contributed to the rise of piracy, as both Spanish colonies and their newly independent competitors hired privateers to prey on each other. Sailors from the Venezuelan Independent squadron earned a special reputation for brutality.[4]

But why so many privateers? One of the reasons was the continuation of the transatlantic slave trade, still legal under Spanish law in Cuba after it was banned in the United States. In the 1810s, privateers attacked slave ships and brought the captured slaves to places such as Amelia Island (for sale to Georgia) and Galveston (for sale to Louisiana). According to the historian David Head, this trade ended around 1820.[5] Americans continued to be involved in the transatlantic slave trade even after it became a hanging offense in the 1820s through the cover of false Spanish papers or Spanish partners in Cuba. The regional origins of American merchants involved in the international slave trade after 1820 remains unclear, but Charleston was no longer the center for the transatlantic slave trade that it had been through 1808.[6]

The removal of the Napoleonic bonanza businesses showed the weakness of other forms of enterprise, such as the dry goods trade. Visiting Charleston in 1815, Stephen Girard's correspondent, C. I. Bürckle, was amazed at the small number of men engaged in the dry goods trade, the total lack of wholesalers, and the few backcountry storekeepers who bought dry goods in the city. Bürckle attributed the weakness of this sector to the thin consumer culture of the backcountry.

> The people in the interior of this State chiefly manufacture their own clothing, and the population being mostly black, but little of

Table 6.2. Reexports from the United States, 1803–1833

Year (through Sept. 30)	*Value of Reexports, in Millions of Dollars*
1803	14
1804	36
1805	53
1806	60
1807	60
1808	13
1809	21
1810	24
1811	16
1812	8
1813	3
1814	.1
1815	7
1816	17
1817	19
1818	19
1819	19
1820	18
1821	21
1822	22
1823	28
1824	25
1825	33
1826	25
1827	23
1828	22
1829	17
1830	14
1831	20
1832	24
1833	20

Source: Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States of America (Durrie & Peck, 1835)*, 35–36.

> the finer kind of goods is required;__ I have been astonished to see Judges, Lawyers & officers in the army wear Shirts, westcoats & Pantaloons made of homespun, in the country the Planters wear even homespun coats, and the women of the lower class as well as all the blacks wear nothing but what they make themselves.

He believed that most farmers and planters manufactured their own cloth. While we might assume that the rise of cotton cultivation had made backcountry plantation living increasingly luxurious, this visitor from Philadelphia believed that even the wealthiest rural South Carolinians looked poor and countrified.

To illustrate that the dry goods trade was marginal and sleazy, antisemitic Northern visitors to South Carolina (such as Bürckle) pointed out that many of the dry goods merchants were Jewish.[7] As the Massachusetts Yankee Mr. Thacher wrote in a fit of self-loathing, "I would think my own Father an accomplish'd knave if he had been any time, & made money in the dry goods line in King St.__ they are all jews or worse than jews__ Yankees__ for a Yankee can jew a jew directly."[8] Statements such as these probably indicate more about Northern culture than the increasingly respected though distinct status of Jews in Charleston.[9]

The situation for dry goods merchants got even worse during the Panic of 1819. The successful merchant John Stoney wrote in April 1819, "You cannot tell who to trust to here, _ there are So many failures amongst the retailers."[10] He added, "The failures of the dry good people & Grocers Continue daily."[11] Over the course of the 1820s, backcountry planters became less and less likely to make the annual trip on loaded wagons to King Street to buy supplies, instead relying on stores in Hamburg, Camden, and Cheraw that were supplied by the new steamboats.[12] Except during unusual wartime conditions, the dry goods trade had never been the route to wealth in Charleston, but things became even worse after the War of 1812.

Banking remained important to merchants in Charleston after the war. The percentage of bank officers who were also merchants was consistently high through the early nineteenth century (Table 6.3). The historian Frederic Cople Jaher found that merchants continued to dominate the banking industry in Charleston long after banks in other cities had turned to professionals.[13] However, after the war, banking ceased to grow in South Carolina. Joseph Cardozo, a contemporary observer, wrote, "I would divide the history of our banks into two periods—before and subsequent to the war of 1812." He added that only "a slow increase

Table 6.3. Bank Officers Who Were Merchants

Year	*Number*	*Percent Merchants*
1803	69	43
1808	69	45
1812	99	44
1818	143	42
1828	127	40
1830	130	42

Note: Calculated using bank officers listed in contemporary almanacs, cross-referenced against database of merchants from city directories. Possible matches counted as matches. Almanacs include *Palladium of Knowledge . . . for 1804*; *Hoff's agricultural and commercial almanac, calculated for the states of Georgia and the Carolinas; for . . . 1809*; *The Palladium of Knowledge . . . for . . . 1813*; *The Planters' & Merchants' Almanac, for . . . 1819*; *Miller's Planters' and Merchants' Almanac, for . . . 1829*; *Miller's Planters' and Merchants' Almanac, for . . . 1831.*

took place in our bank capital between the years 1810–11 and 1834."[14] After the war, Bank of South Carolina stock dropped in value. Averaging $77 per share before the war, from 1812 to 1825 the price dropped to an average of $66 per share.[15] No new banks appeared in Charleston until the 1830s. This was, however, better than the situation in other cities, in which wartime exuberance in the creation of state banks led to postwar disaster.[16]

Besides the disproportionate number of merchants serving as bank officers, banking in South Carolina was distinctive in several ways. The banks concentrated primarily on commercial lending. Even the state-run Bank of the State of South Carolina, which was founded in 1812 to provide mortgages to planters, refocused on lending to traders after 1830 because the profits were higher.[17] South Carolina's banks were unusually stable for their era; there were no bank failures in Charleston before the Civil War.[18] Although there were fewer banks in Charleston than in many Northern cities, by 1849, "in per capita bank credit, South Carolina rivaled New York and Louisiana and trailed behind only southern New England."[19] This ready access to commercial capital helped foster the cotton trade.[20]

If the dry goods trade and the trade with the West Indies dwindled in this era and banking was stable but not growing, why did the number of merchants working in Charleston rise so quickly after the war,

then drop so precipitously? The primary reason was the price of cotton. Using an idiosyncratic definition of the term "commercial" ("commerce rests upon surplus production; transportation is mechanical, and may be equally well performed by one nation as another"), the contemporary analyst Adam Seybert wrote that South Carolina was "entitled to be at the head of the list of the commercial states."[21] Both cotton and rice sold at unusually high prices immediately after the War of 1812, which may have lured men to the South.[22] One Charleston-based merchant wrote to some New York–based friends in 1817, "Will you next winter join me in purchasing cotton to be shipped to Liverpool for our joint risk? . . . I am convinced it is a good business. I have not known a shipper in this market notwithstanding the invariable high prices but has done well."[23] In short, "it appears to me without risk."[24] As the historian William Freehling wrote, these were the "days of jubilee" in Charleston.[25]

By June 1819, these days were over. As one merchant complained, "Business of every Discription Bad beyond all former President__ and Failure Dayley,__ You may hear the Question_ [']Who's gone to Day![']_ as Regular as the Day com[es]."[26] As Stephen Girard said about the cotton trade in Charleston in 1824, it was "a lottery which now & then turns out a small prize, but generally prove[s] ruinous."[27] Through 1860, cotton prices never regained the highs of 1815 and 1819.[28]

Charleston, the Cotton Port

After the Panic of 1819, Charleston's merchants continued to focus primarily on the export of cotton. According to Cardozo, "The class of merchants who grew out of the direct foreign trade of Charleston with the ports of Europe, arising from the neutral relations of the United States, had withdrawn from business or were dead." These merchants "were replaced by those who were connected with the indirect trade through Northern ports—with the shipment of produce through New York and the business of foreign exchange through the same channel connected therewith."[29]

The rise of industrialization in Britain made cotton an increasingly important export for the United States, from 39 percent of the total value of exports in 1816–20 to 56 percent between 1831 and 1835.[30] South Carolina took a central role in the cultivation of cotton from the 1790s. Through 1821, the state was the nation's top cotton producer, and

it remained in the top five through 1849.[31] Locally, cotton supplanted rice as Charleston's most valuable export. The British consul, William Ogilby, calculated the value of cotton and rice exported from Charleston from 1829 through 1831 (Table 6.4). For all three years, cotton was over 76 percent of the value of all exports. Rice had been an average of 64 percent of the value of exports from 1768 through 1772.[32] (These statistics also give a sense of the decline of reexports from Charleston.)

Given the importance of the cotton trade in Charleston, it is not immediately obvious that it would foster a small and lethargic community of merchants. William Freehling, normally very insightful about the South Carolina economy, inaccurately believed that "import-export merchants prospered" during the 1820s due to "Charleston's stable amount of trade."[33] If that were true, the number of merchants listed in the directory would not have dropped so dramatically throughout the decade, from 355 in 1822 to 173 in 1829. The explanation for the dwindling mercantile population can be seen in a comparison of the post-1815 period with the colonial period.

Colonial international trade was based on amicable relationships between individuals. By the period after the War of 1812, networks of means had developed to the extent that such personal relationships were much less necessary. Take, for example, the growing national banking industry, which featured a more streamlined and reliable method of transferring capital than had been available during the colonial era, thanks to the Second Bank of the United States. The merchant Thomas Henry Hindley explained that "some Houses here get their Friends to the northward, to place a letter of credit with the Branch Bank at the Town they reside, for the amount that is to be drawn for, which enables the House here to draw through the Branch Bank of this place, without an Endorser."[34]

All this was much simpler than the colonial method of attempting to find a private local endorser of a bill of exchange drawn on a British house, a method that depended on the presence of well-capitalized, Charleston-based individuals who were well informed about the financial stability of the men on whom the bill was drawn. Those knowledgeable locals generally happened to be merchants. While financial development made trade more efficient, it hurt the business of individual lender-merchants.

But more important, Europe's inconsistent need for rice and its more predictable demand for cotton made the role of post–War of

Table 6.4. Value of Rice and Cotton Exported from Charleston, 1829–1831

Year	*Value of Rice*	*Value of Cotton*	*Total Value of Exports*	*% Value of Rice*	*% Value of Cotton*
1829	1,667,256	5,708,656	7,510,506	22	76
1830	1,172,195	6,293,927	7,618,819	15	83
1831	1,218,859	4,885,431	6,266,233	19	78

Source: William Ogilby, "Answers to the Foregoing Queries by His Majesty's Consul at Charleston, South Carolina," William Ogilby Report, University of South Carolina. All values are in U.S. dollars.

1812 merchants less important than that of colonial merchants. When the wealthy colonial merchant Henry Laurens wrote his clients and partners before the Revolution, he tried to estimate how much rice had been exported and how much still remained in the country. He wrote a business partner that "exports exceed 90,000 Barrels therefore there cannot be a vast quantity in the Country."[35] Laurens probably would have been able to obtain export data; a local newspaper intermittently published trade statistics before the Revolution.[36] However, he typically avoided quantifying the rice supply in his letters. For example, he explained that the supply of rice was temporarily low because "the Rice Factors, altho the Crop of Rice is very large, begin to stop some parcels from coming & to Store others that does come to Market." In this letter he did not estimate the size of the crop of rice or compare the amount shipped with the amount shipped in previous years.[37] R. C. Nash has pointed out that Europeans typically bought rice only when there were crop failures in Europe.[38] There was no use comparing demand one year with the demand of previous years, because it fluctuated freely. Laurens made sure that his clients knew about the situation in South Carolina, but he did not believe that a stream of statistics would make his information any more credible to his clients.

Letters written after the War of 1812 emphasize quantifiable information. Lewis Trapmann, a locally prominent merchant who served as consul from Prussia, heard about rumors in Liverpool suggesting that the supply of cotton would be inadequate for the year's needs.[39] Trapmann argued that the supply would be adequate and backed his assertion with statistics:[40]

Estimate of the Supply of Cottons for 1829/30—	
Gulf of Mexico	460,000
Georgia & So. Carolina	380,000
No. Carolina & Virginia	70,000
	910,000
Probable distribution	
Home consumption	120,000
France & Contt. Of Europe	230,000
Great Britain	560,000
	910,000

While it is suspicious that Trapmann's supply and demand tally exactly, his attempt to estimate the need for cotton represents an advance beyond what could have been done when rice was South Carolina's preeminent crop. Cotton went to a specific number of factories in Europe and North America; rice was purchased by a varying number of merchants to supply countries where the crops had failed. Laurens needed to know about how much rice was left in the backcountry because a shrunken supply would increase price. He needed to know whether factors had really run out of rice or whether they were just temporarily withholding rice from the market. Men who sold cotton, like Trapmann, needed to know the supply of cotton for an additional reason: they could estimate the total demand for cotton. Accurate quantification was more useful once demand was known, and therefore cotton impelled the Charleston merchants to adopt statistical analysis.

Since what Charleston's merchants knew could be readily displayed as data, there was no reason for them to write letters to each client. Information about the cotton crop was sent to clients in a form that was increasingly quantified and far more impersonal than the information about colonial-era rice or Napoleonic War–era crops had been. What merchants after the War of 1812 sent to clients was often merely a preprinted sheet with a short letter referring to the client's own business scribbled on the flyleaf. Typically, these preprinted sheets reported the size of the cotton and rice crops exported to date, comparing them to the amount exported the previous year, and estimating the stock on hand. Vincent Nolte, a merchant based in New Orleans, claimed that he, in 1818, was the first to publish such statements.[41] However, European firms had issued preprinted circulars before Nolte did.[42] Firms in Charleston commonly mailed printed proprietary analysis by the 1820s.[43] Later, anonymously compiled statements were publicly available.[44] Even more

detailed statements, including the news from Liverpool, could be purchased in the 1830s from a Charleston newspaper publisher.[45] Merchants did not even have to pretend that they were doing the majority of their own research.

Emphasizing the quantifiable was a trend that extended beyond Charleston.[46] As Patricia Cline Cohen has discussed, numeracy reached a point in the 1790s when the collection of statistics seemed to be a laudable enterprise. Since the sixteenth century, Cohen noted, men had believed that "whatever was quantifiable was objective, in the sense that it existed apart from any imposition of taste or moral judgment on the part of the viewer."[47] After the War of 1812, Charleston's merchants sent statistic-enriched, often preprinted letters because they wished to appear objective, unbiased, and detached. Laurens and his prerevolutionary cohorts, in contrast, eschewed statistics because they wished to give their correspondents the sense that they were receiving personal service from men who had inside information. They alluded, mysteriously, to letters from correspondents informing them of political decisions affecting trade, and to friends in the backcountry who would let them know about the state of the crops. Both the colonial and the nineteenth-century merchants attempted to charm their clients with the accuracy of their information. In the colonial world, good information was perceived as secret, hidden, and achieved through superior personal networks. In the nineteenth-century world, good information was perceived as public, precise, and untainted by personal opinion.

After the War of 1812, references to politics, family, and other masculine interests became more infrequent in mercantile letters, as did comments on the importance of friendship and the reciprocal obligations between merchants. When John Longsdon arrived in Charleston in 1819, he wrote a letter to an acquaintance and possible trading partner in England. But while a colonial merchant might promise personal attention and the benefits of trading with his broad network of friends, Longsdon merely offered a generic bundle of data. For example, he wrote to the firm McConnel & Kennedy, "I have the pleasure to commence the transmission of advices to you concerning the State of this market for Cottons—which will be continued from time to time without any other assumption than that you may perhaps at some future period see it desirable to order purchases in this market, and favor me with a share of your correspondence."[48] Longsdon's tone is dry and emotionless rather than cheerfully ingratiating. It is not clear what, if anything, differentiated Longsdon from any other correspondent McConnel & Kennedy might

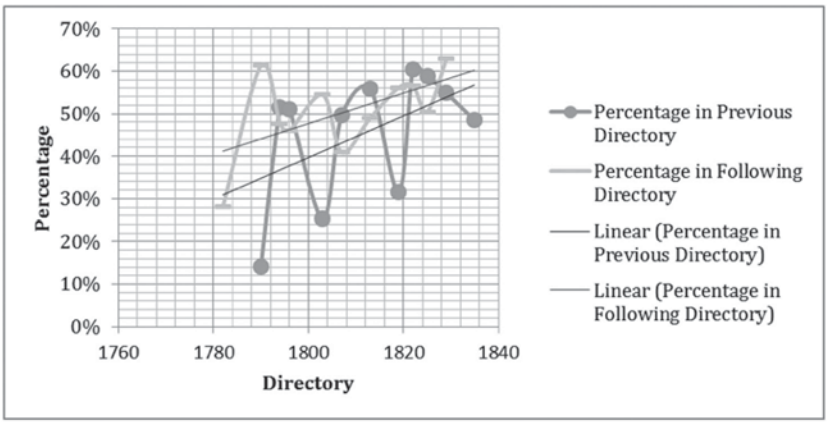
have in Charleston. Longsdon could offer neither personal attachment nor personalized service.

Even merchants who were friendly generally separated private correspondence from their business letters. Frederick Smith, for example, knew the proprietors of Ogden & Ferguson fairly well. Letters from his firm, Gourdin & Smith, were as dry as those from any other firm. For example, Smith wrote Ogden & Ferguson while on his honeymoon tour, discussing a cholera epidemic in New York: "It is indeed consolatory that the ravages of the pestilence should, with so few exceptions, be confined to the intemperate & profligate; still more is it gratifying that every individual in your part of the world whose friendship I can claim, should so far have escaped."[49] While this letter is not particularly intimate, it goes beyond the world of business into an affirmation of presumably shared beliefs, including the common idea that the degenerate were more prone to contract cholera.[50] Gourdin & Smith's letters to Ogden & Ferguson were restricted to business commentary. A letter written before Smith left for his trip demonstrates the usual tone: "Yesterday the letters by the 16 Feby packet came to hand, which have caused an advance in Uplands here—Today several sales were made for France of not decidedly prime at 11 cts—& good fair cannot be had under 10 1/2—English buyers keep aloof, but there is a great disposition to purchase which is checked only by the advance in prices."[51] The middle-class business voice had transformed from the colonial "obedient servant," to the postrevolutionary enterprising lad to the antebellum self-made professional.

As cotton became Charleston's most important export, changes in the level of information publicly available made a new model of business relationship possible. This new style, unlike that of the previous century, did not root commerce in a network of deep personal relationships. As information became more publicly available, nineteenth-century merchants could more readily separate their business interactions from their friendships. Merchants could deal in new markets where they had no personal connections, and they could switch customers without regard to personal loyalty. On the other hand, customers had no social reasons to continue to work with any particular merchant.

When intelligence about the size of the cotton crop and demand for cotton was publicly known, it was difficult for one merchant to offer more insight than any other. Merchants were forced to compete on the quality of their service rather than the quality of their information. Because they were less able to stand out from the pack, entrepreneurial merchants were less drawn to Charleston. In short, the 1820s witnessed

Graph 6.1. Merchants' Stints in Charleston



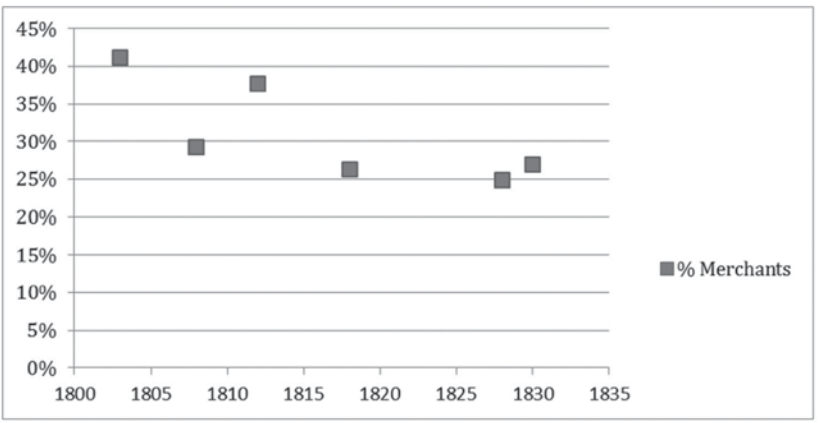
the disintermediation of Charleston's merchants from the trade in staples.

Merchants were a very mobile population; as Adam Smith accurately wrote, "A merchant, it has been said very properly, is not necessarily the citizen of any particular country. It is in a great measure indifferent to him from what place he carries on his trade; and a very trifling disgust will make him remove his capital, and together with it all the industry which it supports, from one country to another."[52] No wonder the number of merchants listed in Charleston's directories dropped from 429 in 1819 to 173 ten years later; with so many of the businesses that had once occupied young men gone, such as slave trading and neutral trading, others stagnated, such as banking and the dry goods trade, and the nature of the staples trade transformed, why stay in Charleston?

Charleston's decline as a center for international trade paralleled that of other Atlantic ports, with one major exception. New York dominated the antebellum period, pushing all other Atlantic ports into relative unimportance. The rise of New York, as it became the center of American goods and capital, drove Bostonian merchants into textile manufacturing and Philadelphians into mining and manufacturing.[53] But unlike these Northern ports, Charleston had already found a way to profit from its countryside, and it did not involve pouring mercantile capital into rural factories.[54]

The city directories allow us to examine whether changes in the mercantile population derived from issues with retention or with attracting

Graph 6.2. Percent of Men in Government Service Who Were Merchants

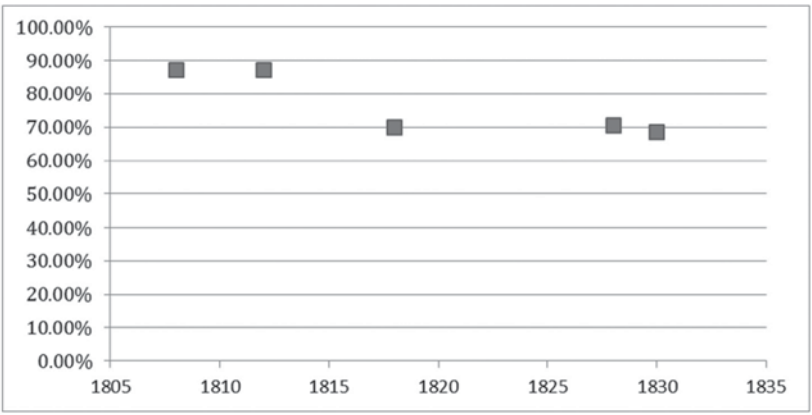


Source: Based on database of merchants from city directories, as well as additional information from *Palladium of Knowledge. . . for 1804; Hoff's agricultural and commercial almanac, calculated for the states of Georgia and the Carolinas; for the year of our Lord, 1809; Palladium of Knowledge . . . for 1813; The Planters' & Merchants' Almanac . . . for 1819; Miller's Planters' and Merchants' Almanac . . . for 1829; Miller's Planters' and Merchants' Almanac . . . for 1831.* This includes incomplete (but likely) name matches.

newcomers. It is clear that the peaks in mercantile population in 1807 and 1819 are due to newcomers arriving in Charleston rather than local men finding work as merchants (though some merchants might have come from elsewhere in South Carolina). But we should also note that after 1807 merchants were increasingly likely to stay in Charleston, despite economic turbulence (Graph 6.1). Perhaps the merchants who stayed in Charleston had social, rather than economic, reasons for doing so.

After the War of 1812, merchants became increasingly disengaged with civic life. The percentage of public service positions occupied by merchants declined. Note that the number of merchants in public life was unusually low in 1808, when there was a large influx of men from out of state. The percentage of merchants who were members of the local fire brigades also dropped after the War of 1812, from about 44 percent before the war to about 35 percent after the war, suggesting an older population of merchants. Perhaps more surprisingly, the men who served on the boards of business organizations such as insurance companies, canal companies, railroads, and the Chamber of Commerce were also less likely to be merchants after the War of 1812. As can be

Graph 6.3. Percent of Men in Business Organizations Who Were Merchants



Source: Based on database of merchants from city directories, as well as additional information from *Hoff's Agricultural and Commercial Almanac . . . for . . . 1809; The Palladium of Knowledge . . . for 1813; The Planters' & Merchants' Almanac, for . . . 1819; Miller's Planters' and Merchants' Almanac, for . . . 1829; Miller's Planters' and Merchants' Almanac, for . . . 1831.* The percentage of merchants involved is probably overstated, because I included likely matches (e.g., where one list had only a first initial).

readily seen, however, merchants were more likely to sit on the boards of business organizations than they were to participate in city government, even when their participation in both was declining. Though there is no way to graph such a thing, the decline in merchants' engagement with business and civic life suggests that they were increasingly putting their energies into the private sphere. (See Graphs 6.2, 6.3.)

Sensibility, Refinement, and Family Life

The increased dryness of mercantile correspondence reflects a larger cultural shift. Postrevolutionary mercantile culture had been brash and rough-and-tumble, as when C. Rapelye wrote a business partner, "Send the enclosed letters to the persons to whom they are directed__ I hope to see you in New York the latter end of May__ When you may calculate on the *pummelling* I promised you__ & which you richly deserved."[55] In both England and America, the 1820s began a transformation in middle-class culture, based on the refinement of morals and manners. Antebellum material culture demonstrated an increased

passion for cleanliness, order, and gentility. A sharp transformation took place in moral life, as the influence of evangelicalism promoted temperance in alcoholic consumption and sexual restraint.[56] Looking back from the perspective of the 1820s, the middle-class author Francis Place remembered with horror "the ignorance, the immorality, the grossness, the obscenity[,] the drunkenness, the dirtiness, and depravity" of the society that had surrounded him in his youth.[57] He believed that his own success, and the success of the middle class as a whole in "Arts, Manufactures and Commerce," reflected the "progress made in refinement of manners and morals."[58] In other words, while middle-class success in the colonial world depended on a cheerful willingness to serve, and in the early republic on being laddish and enterprising, the ideal antebellum businessman was professional, restrained, and self-consciously moral.

A second cultural shift was the rise of separate spheres, an increased distinction between home life and work life. Historians such as Jan Lewis and Mary Ryan have argued that the middle-class American family became increasingly based on emotion and affection in the nineteenth century as business moved away from the center of family life. In Ryan's analysis, this was actually a physical movement. Farmers and artisans were transformed into white-collar workers and factory workers, and they brought these forms of labor out of the home with them.[59] More recent historians have pointed out that the increased emotionalization of Southern life existed in conflict with the continued role of the Southern household as a center for economic production and the continued commitment to patriarchy in Southern law and culture.[60]

Though Charleston's merchants did not necessarily experience a physical separation between home and work, the rise of the cotton trade and the decline of other businesses made family relationships, like business friendships, less necessary for the conduct of business. Institutions replaced family relationships as sources of information, funds, and support. In other words, in the period after the War of 1812, what the historian Jerrold Seigel called networks of means—the impersonal ties that connected the market, the state, and the media—developed to the point where they could support a merchant's business.[61]

Why did family life become more emotionally charged when it was less tied to business? When the family was the center of business life, the family's primary value was stability. Destabilizing emotions were tamped down for the sake of the financial good of the whole. Colonial merchants gossiped endlessly about bad marriages because they feared all

the passions that could break a family apart: envy, lust, anger, ambition. With the link between family and business increasingly tenuous, family members were freed to express the emotions they had been repressing. It is not that colonial mercantile families were incapable of loving each other but that until the development of the American economy ensured that the family was no longer the only trustworthy institution in a dangerous world, family members knew that they must avoid the articulation of dangerous emotions.

After the War of 1812, merchants' letters demonstrate a greater recognition of family members as individuals with wants, desires, and personalities of their own. The letter of a Quaker merchant's wife, who signed herself C, speaks openly of how much she missed her husband: "I dream of thee almost every night, and mostly that thee has just returned, last night that I was walking up & down the parlour with thee, leaning my head on thy breast & too happy to speak."[62] But C was not the only writer to continue the romantic exploration of sensibility. This is most clear in how writers treated the death of a loved one and in their treatment of child rearing. As Karen Haltunnen has written, the nineteenth century saw a dramatically expanded ritual of mourning.[63] The prolonged time of mourning, the increased emphasis on mourning clothes, and the sheer amount of literature about the experience of bereavement all testify to the sentimentalization of family life.

Eighteenth-century mourning is exemplified by Henry Laurens's reaction to the death of his beloved eldest son, John, the only son that Henry treated as an equal. Perhaps Henry saw his son as more than an equal; John was polished, witty, and educated and could even read Latin—a real gentleman, as his father was not. When he died in battle very close to the end of the Revolution, the news clearly broke his father's heart. At the same time, Henry's letters reveal a man trying to mourn quickly. Prolonged grieving, he believed, was against the will of God: "'tis when We are in heaviness of soul in anguish and bitterness of mind, we think upon God; When we sincerely say, 'father thy will be done,' we obtain his peace . . . which . . . subdues the turbulent breast and alleviates the deepest affliction. tis then We reflect and give thanks for unmerited past mercies and even 'adore that justice too which strikes our Comforts dead.'" Laurens was citing a hymn by Isaac Watts about Job.[64] In Laurens's mind, God was a father whose decisions, even when seemingly arbitrary, should be respected and obeyed by his children without complaint.[65]

A particularly good example of the new attitude toward death can be seen in Thomas Napier's letters. In 1848, Napier wrote a sympathy letter

to his niece and nephew, a minister and his wife, after the death of their child. Like Laurens, he recommended acquiescence to the will of God: "You who are able fully to realize Gods Sovereignty over us and property in us will bow with meek Summission to his will and be able to say 'Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord'." Also like Laurens, Napier believed that peace came from the recognition that God had ultimate power over all mankind. But Napier went further, suggesting that the whole experience should serve as an object lesson, which the parents should contemplate for the sake of their own salvation.

> It is a great Comfort for us to know that those who are dear to us are forever removed from all evil and in possession of an eternity of blessedness In such a happy state you can now contemplate your dear departed Child May Such a view loosen the hold that this world of Sin and death may leave on you and may fully prepare you to meet him in that Heavenly home "which Christ has prepared for them who love him."[66]

Napier wanted his niece and nephew to have "Comfort" and the hope of seeing their child again in heaven. Obedience was no longer enough; emotional acceptance was increasingly central to the experience of mourning.

Thomas Middleton's reaction to the sudden death of his wife, Mary, in 1822, exemplifies the more modern method of mourning.[67] Mary and Thomas were staying on Sullivan's Island, where Charleston's citizens traditionally went to escape the epidemics of the summer months. After a beautiful day, a hurricane suddenly struck the island late at night. Afraid that the house was going to collapse, the couple left the house clinging to each other, but the wind ripped them apart. Mary was found the next morning, drowned in a pond.[68] Thomas was an artistic man—he painted and played the guitar—and he decided to write a poem about his loss.[69] Calling himself "Edwin" and his wife "Eda," he wrote what seems to be an accurate account of the night. This poem demonstrates that he believed, like Henry Laurens, in the necessity of submission to God's will. Nevertheless, he remained haunted by the memory of his late wife and was driven to remember and reexperience his sense of mourning. "The midnight Storm has ceased but when will cease/The storm within this the bosom?," he lamented.

He remembered his wife as a paragon of womanly virtues.

If ever here affection found a rest
It nestled [*illegible*] in her own sweet breast
If ever modest worth with dignity refined
be surest end of a virtuous mind
If ever charity's benignant ray
or gentle pity warmed the loving clay
or pious duty to her god conceald,
a hope of future bless reveald—
Then surely she was blest with them combined
And reigned in loveliness of woman kind

Mary was kind, dignified, virtuous, charitable, and devout, a shining example of womanhood. She and Thomas created an affectionate marriage:

Say can the turtle quiet seek its nest—
where once it pillow'd on its mates sweet breast
the parlour of his joys

Mary's love was like a parlor—the nineteenth-century center for domesticity, a haven from the world. Where was "the parlour of his joys" now that his wife was gone?

Thomas pressed further, imagining the physical presence of his wife.

Methinks I see her now, [she/and] meets my sight
arrayed in maiden purity of light
As when I first had sued with [*illegible*] tone
of faithful love had sought her for his own
She comes the mornings herald of the sky
and spread her genial influence by
content [*illegible*] on her modest brow
her placid smiles, a secret charm bestow,
and in her mantled cheek & hazle eye,
that sparkles bright a thousand beauties lie
But hence away these maddening hopeless vision hence

Altlhough imagining Mary tormented him, Thomas continued with his account of their last day together. He remembered coming home and finding her standing on the porch, smiling at him. The memory of their last embrace appears to overcome the poet, and he begins to imagine ways of accepting his loss. Memory is a trap: "boundless fields / where gloom oppress the mind in anguish tossed/and and all seems centered

in the object losses." Foreign travel is also useless. Religion, the poet decides, is the key. He pictures his religion as a lighthouse and himself as a pilot, steering home through stormy seas.

Despite this attempt to find peace, the poet is again driven to continue the story. He writes an evocative description of the oncoming hurricane and the confusion that the family feels as they can see other houses disintegrate and realize that their ceiling is about to collapse. They run out into the storm. The passage where the poet describes Eda's separation from Edwin has faded into near-illegibility. Edwin falls unconscious to the leeward of a large mound. The poet concludes:

> Here let us pause the work of fate is done
> and she the loveliest of her sex is gone
> In youth cut of in beauty's [*illegible*] bloom
> In [summerlife?] drops early to the tomb—
> Too good for eartly cares, by him who made
> to brighter hopes & [*illegible*] bliss convey'd
> In memry leaves us all that once was dear
> to life to love to [*illegible*] here
> who shall refine [*i.e., repine*], when he who reared the flwer
> of brilliant hue & fragrant brething power
> Wills it on [*illegible*] shores in sorrow cast
> or wither'd be & crushed beneath the blast[70]

In the last few lines of the poem, Edwin claims that he will not protest Eda's death, because God, the Creator, has the ultimate power to decide who lives and who dies. But this is contradicted by the powerful loss he feels at Eda's death. Thomas's poetic reenactment of Mary's death was in itself a refusal to accept God's will without complaint. He demanded the right to bring her back to him, if only as a memory.

For Henry Laurens, living in a world where the primary value was obedience, death taught the necessity of submission to an almighty God. Under the influence of evangelical Christianity and romantic explorations of sensibility, it was believed that death's value was that it brought men to a greater emotional understanding of God's love. Thomas's reenactment of Mary's death is an echo of the dead children and lovers that haunt nineteenth-century literature. Their souls shine briefly with the bright light of heaven, and then they are gone, leaving onlookers with a powerful memory of the presence of visible grace.

Like changing patterns of mourning, child-rearing practices revealed the increased importance of emotion in family life. As Jay Fliegelman

has written, in the late eighteenth century, parents increasingly sought to develop independent emotional centers in their children. This is because children were expected to become equals to their parents as they reached adulthood, in contrast to the traditional pattern of subordination to elders.[71] Henry Laurens was a transitional figure. He wanted his children to have an internalized conscience, which would make them think exactly the same way their father did. He frequently wrote letters written from the viewpoint of his children, which showed how he would like them to think. In one case, he imagined his own entry into the Patriot cause, as he would wish his son Harry to see it.

> Is it so? Is my Dear Papa in such danger he whose Life has been spent in the service of his Country & of Mankind__he who when he talks of Loving, of suffering poverty & of dying for his Country always includes Great Britain, he who prays for King George the third & the protestant succession in the House of Hanover__Is he in such danger of being Imprisoned & stripped of his well earned Estate for standing up in defense of the Rights & Liberties of his Country? Ah! this is affecting indeed!

Having made Harry feel sufficiently awestruck at the magnitude of his father's sacrifice, Henry then told his son what to do, while still writing in his son's voice. Harry was to accept that "God's Will be done," to pray, and to study hard and live honorably, "to qualify myself for being a useful member of community in whatsover state it may please God to place me.[72] As in the case of any other tragedy, Henry believed that a man's first responsibility in the face of the destruction of his estate was to accept his fate without complaint, knowing that this was God's plan.

Later fathers placed more emphasis on independent thought. In a letter written at the end of the year, Thomas Napier encouraged his daughter to reconcile her accounts with God, in the same way he annually reconciled his own business ledgers.

> To take such a review of the *departed year* as its importance requires, it will not do to look upon it as a whole, but let us divide it into seasons, months, weeks, days, hours, & minutes, & what we have received through each of these periods of time, & each of these seasons, let us examine, & see if we have given due credit for all that we have received, & duly consider what responsibilities are connected with said receipts. Then let us see how we have complied with these responsibilities, for just so far as we have discharged

> them, are we to be credited. The a/c just stated, we shall see how the balance stands, for . . . we must feel, just so far as we have [torn]iled in so disposing of them, we stand indebted to the giver, which debt we must discharge or [s]ome one for us, or we come under the penalty of Laws, human, & Divine.

Napier imagined his daughter precisely tallying up her obligations to the people around her. In this metaphor, we see the same increased quantification that had characterized mercantile business since the 1790s. Most important, according to Napier, was for his daughter to reflect on the debt she owed to God.

> Now if in reviewing the year just gone we find that we have yielded to the leadings of our wicked hearts, & that we have not been drawn to God by all his continued goodness, we must clearly see, & should feel, that we have greatly increased our guilt, & provoked God to come out in judgment against us, & with-draw his goodness from us, & if so, what would or will be our fate?[73]

Although Napier wanted his daughter to engage in self-examination, he did not encourage any particular result. He did not recall any specific incidents that indicated her ingratitude. That was Ann's task, not her father's. Nor did he ask her to share the results of her introspection with him. He believed that her self-examination should be between her and her God.

What is also striking about this metaphor is that it implies that Ann, through the diligent accumulation of good works, might actually come out ahead in her debt to God. Merchants tallied up their accounts, after all, in the hope of finding that their adventures had made a profit. While Napier may not have fully thought through his metaphor, the fact that he would consider it appropriate demonstrates the weakening of Calvinist thought and the increased importance of good works, characteristic of nineteenth-century religion.

In all the points previously mentioned—the romanticization of mourning, the weakening of paternalistic child rearing—Charleston's merchants seem very similar to their middle-class peers to the North, but their families were rendered distinctive by the presence of slavery. Several of Charleston's merchants—including Adam Tunno, one of the city's most powerful and successful men—had African American romantic partners. Though Zephaniah Kingsley was based primarily in Florida, perhaps we can use his well-documented marriage as an example of how

such relationships might work. Anna Kingsley, born in Senegal, became the wife of Zephaniah after he bought her as a thirteen-year-old slave in Cuba. As he said about her, "She has always been respected as my wife and as such I acknowledge her, nor do I think her truth, honor, integrity, moral conduct, or good sense will lose in comparison with anyone."[74] Anna helped run the households and plantations where she lived with her children, acting as "deputy husband" when he traveled. For example, while she and Zephaniah lived on Fort George Island, she "was a partner in the planting process, checking the health of the workers daily and filling in as manager during her husband's absences."[75] The historian Daniel Schafer has suggested that Anna brought African traditions to the Kingsley family. When the widowed Anna returned to antebellum Florida, her plantation was near several small farms owned by "former slaves of Anna and Zephaniah who had formed patron-client bonds with the Kingsley kin after they were emancipated." Schafer explained that these relationships were "reminiscent of Senegal, where patron-client ties were often formed by Wolof slave-owners and their liberated bondsmen."[76]

Zephaniah told an interviewer why he had married Anna: "She was a fine, tall figure, black as jet, but very handsome. She was very capable, and could carry on all the affairs of the plantation in my absence, as well as I could myself. She was affectionate and faithful, and I could trust her."[77] Furthermore, her temperament was pleasing to her husband. Had Zephaniah's friend James Hamilton been asked why he had married his Scottish wife, Isabella, the answers would likely have been quite similar—though Isabella undoubtedly had more choice about entering the relationship than Anna did.

Though not as outspoken about it as Kingsley, Adam Tunno was also involved in a long-term relationship with the woman who ran his household. Called the "king of the Scotch" in Charleston by one observer, Tunno was a well-loved figure in business circles.[78] He and his free black housekeeper, Margaret Bettingall, had two children together. The details of their relationship came to light in a court case in the early twentieth century, after Tunno's estate was unexpectedly awarded money by the federal government for a ship he had lost to the French. A former slave testified that Tunno and Bettingall were regarded as "man and wife." Bettingall "superintend[ed] everything" at Tunno's house.[79] And yet, as the historian Cynthia Kennedy-Haflett found, theirs was a private marriage. Publicly, Tunno was a bachelor. The same observer who testified that Tunno and Bettingall were married revealed the limits of their relationship. He never saw the two eat together, walk through the streets

together, or go to church together. Tunno did not call Bettingall his wife in his will, and in the same document, he only referred to their daughter by her name, not by his relationship to her.[80]

This secretiveness was very common in interracial relationships. James Couper, who was married to a white woman, sent greetings to James Hamilton from his wife at the end of his letters. Zephaniah Kingsley never mentioned his wife in letters to Hamilton. William Ogilby, the British consul in Charleston, met Tunno several times without being aware that Tunno considered himself married or that he had children.[81] For this reason, we may never know the truth about whether several other Charleston merchants had part-African families. The five Charleston- and Savannah-based Simons brothers all had African American partners, but the identities of the mothers and children of their families remain murky.[82] The African American Titus Gregorie owned his two enslaved children but was concerned that they would be taken from him and sold for his debts. He "sold" his children to James Gregorie under conditions that make it clear James was really more of a trustee than an owner. It is not clear what the relationship was between Titus and James Gregorie or why they had the same last name.[83] In his will, William Ancrum freed "My Mulatto Boy named John the Son of my late Negro Woman Named Nanny And also My Negro Woman Betsey and her little Daughter named Martha." Note also that Nanny is described as "Negro" and John as "Mulatto." Unfortunately, this is all the information I have found about John and Martha.[84] Family history recounts that Joseph Augustus Sasportas, the son of the merchant Abraham Sasportas, was expelled from Beth Elohim for marrying an African American woman. To date, genealogical research has been unable to prove the relationship between Joseph and Abraham Sasportas.[85] In general, Charleston's merchants do not seem to have wanted to leave a paper trail of their interracial relationships.

Still, as conscientious fathers, men like Fraser and Tunno faced the problem of caring for their children in a racist society. Fraser suggested that his son be educated in England because "in the latter Country no particular Prejudice does exist as to the colour, it is only the Merit in a Person that is apreciated."[86] Despite Fraser's care in planning for the welfare of his children, his sister managed to snare a third of the estate—far more than Fraser had intended.[87] Men like Fraser were caught in a conflict of interest. Their businesses were built on slavery, but the welfare of their partners and children rested on rendering them exceptional.

Middle Class in a Slave Society

Slavery reshaped how merchants understood class. Like other middle-class men in the nineteenth century, merchants were preoccupied with the problem of controlling the lower classes. What distinguished Charleston's merchants from their peers in the North was the degree of fear they experienced. While historians have emphasized the animosity between the middle class and the working class in the antebellum North, no Northern community experienced the anxiety of Charleston's merchants. Paul Johnson wrote that in Rochester, "businessmen and their families worried incessantly about what went on in the squalid streets and questionable establishments that surrounded their homes."[88] Nervous these people might have been, but they never worried that the people who lived in the poorer area of Rochester would rise up and slaughter them all as they slept. Charleston's merchants lived in constant, vividly imaginative horror of a slave rebellion.

Fears were especially intense during wartime. During the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the white population worried that slaves would take advantage of political instability to revolt. In 1775, Josiah Smith wrote that the slaves believed a rumor that they would be free when the new governor, Lord William Campbell, arrived. He added that their "impertinent behaviour" had impelled the colony's legislature to recruit "Two Thousand Men Horse & foot." "I can assure you," he concluded, "that a very martial Spirit now reighns among Persons of all Ranks here."[89] Smith may have felt that the rumors passed by South Carolina's black population had backhandedly benefited the Patriot cause, by unifying the white population in martial pride. Nevertheless, he took the threat of slave rebellion seriously and was relieved by the legislature's military response.

The merchants' fears reached their peak in the spring of 1822. A slave, Peter Desverneys, informed his master, John Prioleau, that he had heard a massive slave rebellion was to occur on June 16.[90] Several slaves were immediately arrested and interrogated. After a week in solitary confinement and afraid that he was about to be executed, William Paul, the man who had originally told Desverneys about the plot, confessed to Thomas Napier, who was a city council member, "that he had for sometime known of the plot, that it was very extensive, embracing an indiscriminate massacre of the whites. . . . He stated, that the period fixed for the rising, was on the second Sunday in June." From then, Napier was actively engaged,

as a member of the Committee of Vigilance, in pursuing the supposed perpetrators of the Denmark Vesey Rebellion.[91]

At the time, Napier was a partner in Napier, Rapelye & Bennett, a firm of auctioneers and commission merchants. He had arrived in New York from Glasgow in 1797, along with Andrew Napier, who was probably a relative.[92] By 1799, the two had established a store on Tradd Street in Charleston, which imported dry goods "well calculated for the WEST-INDIA MARKET, and entitled to drawback."[93] The Napiers also maintained a firm on Pearl Street in New York.[94] Together, they continued to send dry goods that were marketable in the West Indies to Charleston and cotton from the South to New York, later taking on an additional partner. In 1806, they allowed the partnership to dissolve.[95] Their timing was excellent, given the decline of the West Indies trade.

Thomas remained in Charleston, where by 1808 he branched into the vendue (auction) business and continued to work as a commission merchant.[96] His choice of careers probably reflects the continuing demand for cotton (even if illicitly exported) and budget-friendly goods. As an auctioneer, he regularly sold slaves, such as the "sound, sober and honest" people who ended up on the auction block because of their master's "want of cash."[97] An auctioneer was a busy man in the economically pinched years around the War of 1812.

As Napier became increasingly successful, his thoughts turned from the world of trade. Like many successful merchants, he became involved in banking and the insurance industry, serving as director of the Planters' and Mechanics' Bank and the Charleston Fire and Marine Insurance Company.[98] He enjoyed being a family man, marrying at least three times.[99] His first wife, a devout Christian, died "of a rapid consumption" after being married about four months. Her eulogist—possibly Napier himself—wrote, "A more noble mind the writer never saw in health, in trouble, nor in death. She has left behind her an encouraging example for others to live the life of innocence, that, like her, they may die the death of peace."[100] Like his first wife, Napier had a special taste for Christian causes, serving on the Board of Managers of the Sabbath School Union Society, an organization pledged to work across denominations to promote Sunday schools.[101] In other words, from what we know of Napier, there is nothing atypical about him, except for perhaps his success: his Scottish origins, his geographic mobility, the lines of business he pursued, his attachment to evangelical Christianity, and his devotion to family life are all normal for a merchant of his era.

But Napier also had a special love for politics. While still a young man, he served as a Petit and Common Pleas Juror.[102] As far as I can tell, Napier first ran in and won an election as warden (Charleston's equivalent to city councilman) in 1818.[103] Though his politics are difficult to discern, in the election of 1820 Napier was described as "ENEM[Y] TO OPPRESSIVE TAXATION," and he generally sat on city council committees having to do with finance.[104] By 1822, Napier was an experienced public official who had managed to stay in office even though he had moved between wards.[105]

We do not know whether the Denmark Vesey Rebellion was a well-organized uprising detected just before it started, a witch-hunt by local whites, or something in between.[106] But Napier utterly believed that his efforts to round up possible suspects and interrogate prisoners had averted the unthinkable.[107] He may have been the source of the rumors his business partner, Jacob Rapelye, repeated to his relative, Paul Rapelye: "By a mere accident the plot was discovered & only one day before it was to be put into execution—they had plenty of guns, powder, &c. & the Drayman was to act as cavalry."[108] By the end of the trials, thirty-five men were executed.[109]

The logic of slavery led Thomas Napier, this devout, civic-minded family man, to participate in a bloodbath, and he apparently never regretted his conduct. Thirteen years later he wrote in the Charleston *Mercury*, "The year 1822 . . . I shall never forget, as I then had an opportunity of seeing something of the fruits of Abolitionists. After such a sight, any man that could advocate their principles, is, in my opinion, the worst enemy of man, and destitute of every christian principle."[110]

We might like to think that the South was different from the North in its response to a putative slave rebellion. As the historian Jonathan Wells drew the contrast, by the 1850s, Southern "middle-class support for slavery . . . clashed with the free labor ideology of the northern middle class. Through these divisions . . . a southern middle class was born."[111] But we must be careful not to project these middle-class divisions from the late antebellum period backward into the 1820s. While it is certainly possible to find expressions of Northern horror at the excesses of Charleston's politicians in the Vesey affair, it is just as easy to find statements of approval.

In the widely reprinted essay "The Negro Plot at Charleston," the Portsmouth *Journal* wrote, "The course pursued by the City Council was prompt and efficacious."[112] The New York *Spectator* argued that the "discovery was indeed most providential and fortunate; for it appears their

arrangements were so extensive, that but for the timely disclosure, the whole of South Carolina would in a few days have presented the horrid spectacle once witnessed in St. Domingo. And had the first movement in Charleston been successful, it would probably have been the signal for a general massacre through the slave states."[113] The Rhode Island *American* reprinted a comment from the Charleston *City Gazette*: "Those (they were but few) who at first thought we had no cause for alarm, must be overwhelmed with conviction to the contrary."[114] While the editor of the Norfolk *Herald* complained that the New York newspapers were "*reflecting in the harshest manner on the humanity and justice of the tribunal which condemned the miserable conspirators to a punishment*," a New York editor replied, "We are in the habit of watching the New-York papers pretty closely, and have never seen any thing of the kind."[115] While he may have overstated the case, in general, the Northern response to Charlestonian treatment of the putative Vesey Rebellion was positive and approving.

As a writer at the Portsmouth *Journal* explained, even Northerners opposed to slavery in Missouri would have no interest in fomenting a slave rebellion elsewhere.[116] As antebellum historians, always attentive to the signs of impending Civil War, we must resist the impulse to sever the Northern middle class from its Southern counterpart prematurely. Responses from the north to the Vesey Rebellion indicated that the political compromises of the 1820s were still holding; that the North accepted slavery, so long as it remained confined to the South. In other words, the Southern middle class was distinctive because of the *presence* of slavery before it was unusual because of its *attitude* toward slavery.

A few years before she interviewed Zephaniah Kingsley, as mentioned in the introduction to this book, Lydia Maria Child was living with her husband in Northampton, Massachusetts, attempting to grow sugar beets. Her next-door neighbor was none other than Thomas Napier. As in Charleston, Napier was active in the local church, and his large donations may have persuaded the minister not to speak against slavery. Not surprisingly, the abolitionist Child loathed him, calling him "a rich slave-auctioneer" and finding his loud praying hypocritical. Her husband used to try to drown him out by playing his accordion.[117] Child even satirized Napier in her novel, *A Romance of the Republic*; her stand-in character helps one of his relative's slaves escape to freedom.[118] In reality, Napier remained in Northampton until the mid-1840s, when he moved back to New York City.[119] He outlasted Child, who had only remained in Northampton two years, disconnected from her neighbors

because of her political beliefs. Her views won out in her books but not in reality. In the real world, slavery would continue to grow, spread, and change, along with the rest of the Cotton Empire.

Conclusion

Before the Revolution, Charleston's merchants served as part of the British Empire, exporting rice and indigo in good mercantilist fashion. Independence and the Napoleonic Wars expanded their opportunities, enabling them to engage in finance and neutral trading and to ship a new crop, cotton. As their economic role changed, so did their business culture, from deferential and restrained to wildly ambitious.

In the years after the War of 1812, Charleston's trade role shrank to the export of cotton. Even though South Carolina's productivity continued to grow, developing networks of means and increased access to information disintermediated Charleston's merchants from the cotton trade, and the mercantile population dropped dramatically. Those who remained built a middle-class culture that included a more refined standard of behavior and an emotionally rich family life, similar to their peers in the North and Europe. Though Southern middle-class life was rendered distinctive by the presence of slavery, Northern responses to the Denmark Vesey Rebellion demonstrate that in the 1820s, both North and South generally considered abolitionism a dangerous ideology.

As I write these words, once again it is an election year, and both parties are busy appealing to the majority of Americans who think they are middle class. If I may be forgiven a nineteenth-century flourish, how little we know what this means!

A previous generation of historians argued that the middle class was born sometime between the 1830s and 1850s when home separated from work, gender roles hardened, evangelical moral certainty became a form of cultural and political power, and laissez-faire capitalism was seen as essential to progress. This line of argument comes with a corollary: until professionals, traders, and artisans developed these traits as central to their culture, they were not really middle class.[120]

This synthesis had several problems. It has made the American historiography of the middle class out of sync with its British equivalent, which tends to begin at least a century earlier.[121] On the other end of the time line, this synthesis depicts middle-class culture as more or less frozen in time for a century. As the historian Robert D. Johnston has written, "By the 1850s a stereotypical middle class comes to the fore,

having abruptly reached the fulfillment of its historical mission . . . there to slumber until the 1960s."[122]

Because of the tight focus on how industrialization shaped the middle class, crucial aspects of the middle-class experience have been ignored. The Southern middle class was seen as a contradiction in terms. Much was written about the home and the voluntary association; aside from the growing separation between factory and office, or in other words, the separation between the middle class and the working class, the culture of the workplace tended to be ignored.

What historians looked for most of all were signs of resistance to capitalism. Was the home really a sanctuary from the immoral commercial world? Were abolitionists really inspired by the humanity of enslaved people? Many came to believe that the middle class was made up of hypocrites. Social progressivism was a way of hiding one's own faults by attacking another's; the model factory always cuts wages and eliminates perks when the owner loses money; nurturing and smothering are two sides of the same coin, and the Angel in the House was knocking back the Lydia Pinkham. Nice wasn't really nice after all.[123]

Like historians of the Southern economy, historians of the middle class need a more global focus to ask different questions. My goal in this book has been to show that while domesticity and morality—both in their honest and in their hypocritical forms—have been part of middle-class culture, *niceness* is not the defining characteristic of what it means to be middle class but instead described middle-class culture at a certain point in its history. To project these values backward or forward in time is anachronistic. Above all else, to be middle class was (and is) to believe that you possess a set of characteristics that promote success in the market economy, diligence, self-control, and reliability being chief among them. Through the example of Charleston's merchants, we have seen how market conditions prompted members of the middle class to pick up and set aside other attributes as needed. In British-dominated colonial Charleston, merchants accepted their place as genteel subordinates; in the more open postrevolutionary world, they drank, swore, and kept their eye on the main chance. When business was dependent on relationships with trusted friends, merchants worked hard to build their social connections with other businessmen; when disintermediated from the cotton trade, merchants focused their emotional attention on their family lives. Middle-class culture would continue to change through all the transformative years to come.

Perhaps this is the secret to why so many of us think of ourselves as middle class today: it is an idea that seems to expand infinitely. It is less a class in any traditional sense than an assertion that you are ready to face the challenges the economy is bringing to you, whether you happen to be Lydia Maria Child or Thomas Napier.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Weierman, *One Nation, One Blood*, 90–97, 145–54.
2. Child, "Letter from New York," 108.
3. Stowell, *Balancing Evils Judiciously*, 2–4; Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley*, 27–34.
4. Child, "Letter from New York," 111; original emphasis. Unless indicated otherwise, all emphases in quoted material appear in the original.
5. Ibid., 112.
6. This is Shani d'Cruze's phrase. Barry, Introduction to *The Middling Sort of People*, 2.
7. Barry, Introduction, 2–3, 15.
8. Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 68, 86–87; Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, 2; Rogers et al., *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (hereafter cited as *HL Papers*).
9. Bledstein, "Introduction: Storytellers to the Middle Class," 3–7; Barry, Introduction, 3.
10. McCusker, "Colonial Statistics," Eg 5-633.
11. Weber, "Status Groups and Classes," 176.
12. Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, esp. ch. 3.
13. Luskey, "Jumping Counters in White Collars," 174.
14. Weber, "Status Groups and Classes," 179–80; Weber, "The Distribution of Power in Society," 188.
15. Goloboy, "The Early American Middle Class," 537–45.
16. Frevert, "Honour and Middle-Class Culture," 208.
17. Wahrman, "'Middle-Class' Domesticity Goes Public," 422; Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie.*

18. This includes the work of historians like Paul Erickson, Brian Luskey, Stephen Mihm, and Wendy Woloson, especially Luskey, *On the Make*; and Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*.

19. [Josiah Smith] to Mr. William Manning, London, Dec. 5, 1772, Josiah Smith Letter Book, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina (hereafter cited as UNC). Also available in Records of Ante-bellum Southern Plantations (hereafter cited as RASP).

20. Similarly, families used the new rhetoric of "family feeling" in their letters to connect over vast distances. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, 7–11. See also Debby Applegate's insightful essay on middle-class identity, "Henry Ward Beecher and the 'Great Middle Class,'" 107–24.

21. See, e.g., Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's comment, "Most societies . . . have a large middle, if only because most sociological analyses structure data in a manner that guarantees it. The question remains: Middle of what?" Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 41.

22. Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*; Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*; Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*; Green, *Military Education*; Wells and Green, *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century*. An exception to this trend, Emma Hart focuses on the middle class in colonial Charleston. Hart, *Building Charleston*.

23. Wells and Green, *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 3.

24. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*.

25. Haltunnen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*, ch. 1; Laurie, "'We Are Not Afraid to Work,'" 52. On the other hand, for a view of the middle class even less sanguine than my own, see Rockman, *Scraping By*.

26. Breen, "An Empire of Goods"; Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy*.

27. Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital,* 16.

28. The assumption of timelessness in the Old South particularly irked Edward Baptist. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, xviii, 111. For a sophisticated analysis of the problem of treating middle-class culture as a constant for the hundred years after 1850, and how this issue has haunted the historiography, see Johnston, "Historians and the American Middle Class."

29. Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 11; Mary Ryan felt that separate spheres and the association of women with the home had existed more or less intact from "the early nineteenth century" until "the 1960s." Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*, 241.

30. For the middle class and abolitionism, see Bender, *The Antislavery Debate*; for the middle class and its morality-based charity, see Stansell, *City of Women*, esp. 34–35, 70–74.

31. Goloboy, "The Early American Middle Class."

32. A brief note on sources here. I read every collection that I could find that involved people based in Charleston engaged in international trade. I visited depositories in New York, Philadelphia, Ann Arbor, Raleigh-Durham, Columbia, Charleston, and other cities in the United States and Kew and Manchester in the United Kingdom. I am certain that I missed some merchants, especially those who wrote in languages other than English.

There are two forms of bias that I suspect from the surviving evidence. One is that archives in South Carolina tended to save fewer letters from enthusiastic slave traders; these collections ended up in New York. The other is that I suspect there were more letters from debtors retained than written (in the sometimes dim hope of reclaiming these debts), so reading only merchants' letters would give an unfairly negative view of the prospects of mercantile success.

1 / "Very humble Servants"

1. [Hogg & Clayton], Charles Town, to Mr. Henry Smith, March 2d 1763, Hogg & Clayton Letterbook, Duke.

2. Wood, *Black Majority*, xiv.

3. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, ch. 2, offers an excellent discussion of mercantilism and its importance to the colonies.

4. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream*, 144.

5. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 46–47.

6. Dobson, *Scottish Trade with Colonial Charleston*, 168, 181.

7. Nash counted 37 Huguenot merchants out of a total population of 170. Nash, "Huguenot Merchants," 211, 218.

8. Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer*, 64.

9. Ibid., 66.

10. [Hogg & Clayton], Charleston, to Messrs Anderson & Dainziell, 28 Novemr. 1762, Hogg and Clayton Letterbook, Duke.

11. Hart, *Building Charleston*, 44–45.

12. [Leger & Greenwood?], to Messrs. Greenwood & Higginson, February 7th, 1772, Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan (hereafter cited as UMich).

13. [Leger & Greenwood?], to Messrs. Greenwood & Higginson, July 8th. 1772, Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, UMich.

14. Hogg & Clayton Letter Book and Accounts, Duke; James Hamilton Papers, Duke. Nash has an excellent summary of this trade. Nash, "Organization of Trade and Finance," 81–83.

15. Josiah Smith to James Poyas, May 4, 1773, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

16. Josiah Smith to James Poyas, January 25, 1774, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

17. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 77–78, 85–97; Nash, "Organization of Trade and Finance," 82; Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry*, 54.

18. Partnership Agreement, John Chesnut Papers, 1741–1814 (1165.01.01), South Carolina Historical Society (hereafter cited as SCHS).

19. Josiah Smith to Mr. James Poyas, London, 5 Decemr. 1771, Josiah Smith Letterbook, RASP.

20. [Francis Clayton], Charlestown, to Mr. Sheilds, Cowes, march 30 1763, Hogg & Clayton Letterbook, Duke.

21. Nash, "Organization of Trade and Finance," 77, 94–95.

22. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America,* 108, 115, 130, 160, 174, 199.

23. Menard, "Slavery, Economic Growth, and Revolutionary Ideology," 257. Menard estimated the average annual import value to be £436,400.

24. Braund, *Deerskins & Duffels*, 70–72, 97–102, 169–74.

25. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 179–80.

26. Hart, *Building Charleston*, 117.

27. Nash, "South Carolina and the Atlantic Economy," 680.

28. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 187.

29. Nash, "South Carolina and the Atlantic Economy," 682, 692.

30. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 179.

31. [Leger & Greenwood?], Charles Town, to Messrs Greenwood & Higginson, Janry 12th 1772, Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, UMich. See also Josiah Smith, jr, to Mr. James Poyas, London, January 25th 1774, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

32. Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry*, 54.

33. Hart, *Building Charleston*, 39.

34. Donnan, "The Slave Trade into South Carolina," 807.

35. *HL Papers* XI, 224.

36. [Leger & Greenwood?], to Anthony Richardson Esqr, March 19th 1773, Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, UMich.

37. Woods, "The Culture of Credit in Colonial Charleston," 362.

38. *HL Papers* VIII, 141.

39. Ibid., III, 502.

40. Masur, *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, 82.

41. Seigel, *Modernity and Bourgeois Life*, ch. 1.

42. Josiah Smith jr to Mr. William Manning, London, December 5th, 1772, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP. In Haggerty's excellent *"Merely for Money,"* 110, she argues that such expressions of friendship were aberrations from standard letter format, a deviation from "good practice." I would suggest, instead, that they are the marker of a successful relationship, which is why Haggerty noted them primarily between "long-term acquaintances." This is discussed further in ch. 4.

43. Chenault and Reinders, "The Northern-Born Community of New Orleans," 234.

44. [Unknown] to Mr. Dreghorn, July 29, 1763, Hogg and Clayton Letter Book and Accounts, Duke.

45. [Francis Clayton], Charlestown, to Mr. Sheilds, Cowes, march 30 1763, Hogg & Clayton Letterbook, Duke.

46. [Hogg & Clayton], Charles Town, to Mr. Henry Smith, March 2d 1763, Hogg & Clayton Letterbook, Duke.

47. *HL Papers* V, 576.

48. See Sir Egerton Leigh on Henry Laurens, *HL Papers* VI, 457–58.

49. *HL Papers* V, 717 (to James Habersham, a merchant in Savannah). [Josiah Smith] to Rev. James Caldwell, Elizt. Town, April 21, 1774, Josiah Smith Letter Book; [Josiah Smith] to Mr. William Manning, London, October 21, 1774, Josiah Smith Letter Book; [Josiah Smith] to Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon, Princeton, New Jersey, October 29th, 1774, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

50. *HL Papers* IX, 322. Letter to Henry's brother James Laurens, also a merchant.

51. *HL Papers* VII, 150–51. Letter to George Appleby, a London-based merchant and planter.

52. *HL Papers* XI, 204, 292. Letter to Henry's son, John Laurens.

53. Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, 82.

54. *HL Papers* XV, 584.

55. Sir Richard Steele, "The Spectator Club," www.bartleby.com/27/7.html; accessed December 27, 2015.

56. [Josiah Smith, jr.] to Revd. James Caldwell, Eliza. Town, New Jersey, November 25th, 1772, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

57. *HL Papers* VII, 480.

58. [Christopher Fitzsimons], Charleston, to John Gernon Esqr, October 16, 1805, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina (hereafter cited as USC).

59. For more on family life, see chapter 6.

60. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, esp. 7–11.

61. *HL Papers* V, 72–73.

62. Ibid., 71–72, 95–96.

63. Ibid., 109.

64. See also [Leger and Greenwood] to Messrs. William and Jacob Walton & Co., Octr. 8th, 1774, Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, UMich which suggests repackaging old indigo and claiming it was freshly imported.

65. *HL Papers* IV, 148.

66. Ibid., XI, 407.

67. Ibid., 487.

68. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 122.

69. *HL Papers* XI, 407, 487.

70. For exceptional slaves, see Edelson, "Affiliation without Affinity." Compare Zora Neale Hurston's concept of the "pet Negro": Hurston, *Seraph on the Suwanee*, 61. See also Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, on sensibility, esp. 94–95.

71. *HL Papers* X, 2.

72. S. Simons, Charleston, to James Simons, August 31, 1798, in Caldwell Woodruff, "Life and Letters of James Simons Lieutenant, 3rd Dragoons, Continental Army By appointment Brigade Major With a brief account of his son Charles Dewar Simons first Professor of Chemistry University of South Carolina" (Linthicum Heights, MD, Unpublished MS., 1942), 133, USC.

73. Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 15. See also Jaher, *The Urban Establishment*, 327; and for a later use of the trope, Pease and Pease, *The Web of Progress*, 14.

74. Amanda Vickery has recently argued that we have overblown the distinction between landholding and trade among the gentry. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, ch. 1.

75. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 225–28; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, ch. 9.

76. Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, esp. ch. 4.

77. R. Wilson, Liverpool, to Mr. James Hamilton, Charleston, August 20, 1808, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

78. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 131–33; and Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, 101–3.

79. This dilemma is articulated well in Dalzell, *Enterprising Elite*, 64–73.

80. McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 188.

81. Hart, *Building Charleston*, 116–19.

82. Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina*, 141–51.

83. Flavell, *When London Was Capital of America*, 18–25, 91; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors,* esp. ch. 5.

84. Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina*, 8–9, 174–76.

85. Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry*, 122.

86. Ibid., 101–5, 120, 131.

87. *HL Papers* V, 496.

88. Ibid., 473.

89. Starr, *A School for Politics*, 32–41.

90. Anonymous, *Rules of the Charlestown Chamber of Commerce* (Robert Wells, 1773), 3–4.

91. Fraser, *Patriots, Pistols, and Petticoats*, 55.

92. *HL Papers* VI, 238.

93. Milford, *The Gardiners of Massachusetts*, 24–25.

94. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution,* 30. For a similar sentiment, see Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 201.

95. *HL Papers* IX, 227.

96. Ibid., IV, 477.

97. Hart, *Building Charleston*, 42.

2 / The Revolution, John Wilkes, and Middle-Class Mob Rule

1. *HL Papers* V, 37–40.

2. Cash, *John Wilkes*, 6. This brilliant biography also provides insight into middle-class culture in England.

3. Ibid., 68–79, 93–101.

4. Brewer, "Commercialization in Politics," 234–39.

5. Cash, *John Wilkes*, 217.

6. For the importance of Wilkes throughout America, see Hunter, *Purchasing Identity*, 160–63.

7. Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden*, 101.

8. Walsh, *The Writings of Christopher Gadsden*, 66, 72, 73, 84–85.

9. Walsh, *Charleston's Sons of Liberty*, 31–32.

10. Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden*, ch. 5; Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 174.

11. Roger Smith, Leger and Greenwood, to Peter Michell Esqr, December 18th 1773; [Leger & Greenwood?], Charles Town, to Messrs Greenwood & Higginson, December 4th, 1773; [Leger and Greenwood?], to Messrs Greenwood and Higginson, December 15th? 1773, Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, UMich. For similar wartime violence, see Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, esp. 148–52.

12. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 175.

13. Ibid., 221.

14. Ibid., 273–74; Walsh, *Charleston's Sons of Liberty*, 71–72.

15. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 274–75.

16. [Josiah Smith] to Mr. William Manning, London, October 21, 1774, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

17. [Josiah Smith] to Mr. George Appleby, March 14, 1775, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

18. [Josiah Smith] to Mr. James Poyas, London, January 10th 1776, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

19. McCowen, *The British Occupation of Charleston,* 20–23.

20. Ibid., 151.

21. [Josiah Smith Jr.], "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781," 24–25, 20.

22. Edward Darrell, [Charleston], to James Poyas, September 25, 178?; [Josiah Smith], St. Augustine, to Mr. George Appleby, Shifnal in Shropshire, December 2, 1780; [Josiah Smith] to Mr. George Smith, Charles Town, from St. Augustine, December 5, 1780; [Josiah Smith], Chastown, to Mr. William Manning, London, May 20, 1783, in Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

23. Thomas Eveleigh, Philadelphia to Mr. Jean?ff?Cade., August 14, 1781, Thomas Eveleigh Letterbook, USC.

24. Thomas Eveleigh, Philadelphia, to Mr. James Neilson, May 13, 1782, Thomas Eveleigh Letterbook, USC.

25. William Ancrum to Messrs. Greenwood & Higginson, May 14, 1780, William Ancrum Letterbook and Cash Book, USC.

26. Nadelhaft, *The Disorders of War.*

27. S C [Samuel Carne], Charles Town, So Carolina, to Mr. Chrr Rolleston, October 12, 1780, Samuel Carne Papers, USC.

28. Moody and Crittenden, "The Letter-book of Mills & Hicks," 50–51, 56, 57.

29. Miscellaneous Proceedings of the Board of Police, CO5.519, vol. 1, p. 13; and vol. 2, p. 25, at SCDAH.

30. Josiah Smith, Jr. to Capt. John Blewer, Philadelphia, July 29, 1774, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

31. William Ancrum to Messrs. Greenwood & Higginson, 16 Augt 1779, William Ancrum Letterbook and Cash Book, USC.

32. "Board of Police: Evidence Laid Before the Commissioner for Ascertaining the Depreciation of Paper Currency," PRO C.O 5/513, on microfilm at SCDAH, opposite p. 23.

33. Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, vol. 2, 94–96; Lesesne, *The Bank of the State of South Carolina,* 4.

34. William Ancrum to Parker Quince, 14 Feby 1778, William Ancrum to Thos. Craike Esqr., 15 May 1778, William Ancrum Letterbook and Cash Book, USC; Josiah Smith to George Smith, Charlestown, 28th February 81, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

35. For a similar issue in Philadelphia, see Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 199–201.

36. Persky, "Retrospectives: Price Indexes and General Exchange Values," 198. Thanks to Tim Taylor for alerting me to this article.

37. Fisher, "The Tabular Standard in Massachusetts History," 450, 428–32.

38. "Board of Police: Evidence Laid Before the Commissioner for Ascertaining the Depreciation of Paper Currency," PRO C.O 5/513, on microfilm at SCDAH.

39. Persky, "Retrospectives: Price Indexes and General Exchange Values," 200.

40. "Depreciation of Paper Currency," 24.

41. Ibid.

42. Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, vol. 2, 98.

43. Palmer, *Good Men*, iv.

44. [Josiah Smith, Jr.,] St. Petersburg, to James Poyas, London, December 5, 1780; [Josiah Smith, Jr., Charleston,] to Doctor Joseph Hinson, Bermuda, February 1, 1779, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

45. McCusker, "Value of Imports into and Exports from England," *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 2006, Eg 429–42, p. 5-711–5-712.

46. Ibid. vol. 2, Eg 443–60, p. 5-714. Note that the data from Scotland exclude North Carolina, while the data from England and Wales do not.

47. *Historical Statistics,* 2006, Eg 1166–70, p. 5-767.

48. Ibid., Eg 1171–73, p. 5-768.

49. "An account of the Exports from the Port of Charleston to the West Indies, Bahama & Summer Islands from 27 Nov. 80 to 18. febry 81 both days incluse," Prize lists and accounts of exports and imports at Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Florida. Returns and correspondence relating to Brigadier General (Oliver) de Lancey's Brigade of American and of other Loyalist regiments: America, C 106 / 87 PT1, National Archives, Kew.

50. McCusker, "England," *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 2006, Eg 429–42, p. 5-711–5-712.

51. McCusker, "Scotland," *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 2006, Eg 443–60, p. 5-715.

52. Josiah Smith, Jr., Charles-town, to Mr James Poyas, November 30, 1778, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

53. S C [Samuel Carne], Charles Town, So Carolina, to Mr. Chrr Rolleston, October 12, 1780, Samuel Carne Papers, USC.

54. Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, vol. 2, 97–98.

55. Scottish merchants were also disproportionately present in occupied Philadelphia (Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 210).

56. Based on my own calculations using a database of merchants in the directory. Surname information came from Hanks, *Dictionary of American Family Names*. Further discussion of the errors engendered by my process of analysis can be found in the next chapter.

57. I suspect that using Patrick Hanks's surname index as a source for ethnicity resulted in an undercount of Jewish merchants. For example, Cantor is defined as primarily an English surname, and Lopez primarily a Spanish one, though the two last names also appeared among Jews.

58. Moody and Crittenden, "The Letter-book of Mills & Hicks," 53.

59. McCowen, *The British Occupation of Charleston*, 135–36.

60. Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, vol. 2, 98.

61. Ibid., 238.

62. Coker, "The Punishment of Revolutionary War Loyalists in South Carolina," 364.

63. Ibid., 367, 371–72.

64. Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 91–94, 145.

65. Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry," 133. Compare to the over 20,000 slaves imported between 1770 and 1774.

66. Isaac King, London, to Nathaniel Russell, June 8, 1784, Isaac King Papers, USC.

67. Morgan, "Black Society in the Lowcountry," 133.

68. Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 145.

69. [John Gibbons?,] Charleston to Mr. George Douglass, May 10, 1785, John Gibbons Papers, Duke.

70. Susannah Carman, Middeltown to Mr. John Gibbons, Mercht., Charleston, May 23, 1785, John Gibbons Papers, Duke. In standard spelling and punctuation: "Oh,

heavens, Mr. Gibbons, to think if you have any children to have, in the first place, yourself taken from them, then to have them separated from their mother, which certainly will be mine's care if something don't turn up for them very shortly. I have six poor little fatherless children that has been raised so far with as good a prospect as almost any amongst us (Can I express it? Yes, I must, and with too much truth) from a state of affluence almost to a state of beggary. I think I can see you greatly affected. If you have any bowels I you [sic] you must feel for a poor creature circumstanced as I am. Sometimes I think I can take wings and fly to different parts of the world where people owes me. I think if I could see them I could work on their passions more with my tongue than pen as I amn't mistress enough of that to express myself in a proper manner. Dear Sir, let me learn from [*illegible*] you as soon as you possibly can. If you have any faith in the prayers of the widow and fatherless you shall have them 'till the day of your death."

71. Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, ch. 9.

72. Davison Newman & Co., London, to Joshua Ward Esqr, Charleston, May 24, 1791; J. B[ar] Church to Abm. Newman Esqr., December 19, 1793; and John Ward to Messrs. Davison Newman & Co., May 15, 1816, Davison Newman & Co., Guildhall Library Ms 8594–8633, Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

73. Isaac King, London, to Joshua Ward Esqr, Charles Town, June 16, 1783, Isaac King Papers, USC; Wilkins, *The History of Foreign Investment*, x–xi.

74. Isaac King, Bristol, to Joshua Ward, April 2, 1789, Isaac King Papers, USC.

75. Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 145.

76. Bjork, "The Weaning of the American Economy," 548. McCusker found that exports to England and Scotland were lower in 1786 than in 1785. *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 2006, Eg 429–42, p. 5-712; Eg 443–60, p. 5-714.

77. Nathaniel Russell, Charleston, to William Bull II, 18th October 1785, printed in Robert A. Leath, ed., "The Nathaniel Russell Papers, 1765–1837," Nathaniel Russell House Research Series, Historic Charleston Foundation, April 1995, for Architectural Conservation Grant, The Getty Grant Program, Santa Monica, California, vol. IIIa, n.p. Thanks to Robert Leath for giving me a copy of this unpublished collection. Original letter in Library of Congress.

78. Harrison Ansley & Co., London, to Messrs. McCredie & Hamilton, 28th July 1785, Correspondence, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

79. Nash, "Organization of Trade and Finance." See also Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 243–49.

80. "GILLON, Alexander, (1741–1794)," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=G000211; accessed December 27, 2015. His naval service was of little use to his home state—sent to Europe to procure a ship, he ended up returning after the occupation of Charleston and assisting the Cubans with the invasion of Nassau instead. The entire bizarre story is retold in Coker, *Charleston's Maritime Heritage*, 115–22.

81. "Marine Anti-Britannic Society," December 2–6, 1783, *South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser.*

82. Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 97. "On Saturday, the 13th instant," *South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser*, 19 December 1783.

83. Chamber of Commerce manuscripts, SCHS.

84. Hadden, "Business of Justice." Thanks to Sally for graciously sharing a draft of this paper, as well as her notes from the Chamber of Commerce journal.

85. Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 97; "Chamber of Commerce," January 6 to 8, 1784, SCGGA.

86. Chamber of Commerce manuscripts, 8, SCHS.

87. Hadden, "Business of Justice," 27.

88. "On Saturday, the 13th instant."

89. Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 109, 114–17.

90. Maier, "The Charleston Mob," 194.

91. Nadelhaft, *Disorders of War*, 119; *Biographical Directory*.

92. Josiah Smith, Charleston, to Mr. James Poyas, London, 21st January 1784, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

3 / City of Knavery

1. Examples are Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*; Pease and Pease, *The Web of Progress*. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream*, nominally covers this period, but aside from the population data, much of Coclanis's data skips from the 1770s to the 1820s (see, e.g., 117, 120, 141).

2. David Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, vol. 2, 240.

3. Ibid., vol. 2, 103, 162–64.

4. Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 195, 200–201.

5. Isaac King, Bristol, to Nathl. Russell, 7th March 1784, Isaac King Papers, USC.

6. George Nelson, a letter addressed to the Lamberts, but not sent, July 4, 1785, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

7. Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 139.

8. George Nelson to the Lamberts, 14th January 1787, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

9. George Nelson to the Lamberts, Decr. 19 1785, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

10. South Carolina was by no means alone in this response to the problem of international debt; many states enacted similar legislation. Hulsebosch, "Being Seen Like a State."

11. Goloboy, "'Success to Trade.'" See Nadelhaft's *Disorders of War* for the best account of the postwar economy in Charleston.

12. Kaplanoff, "How Federalist was South Carolina in 1787–88?," 81.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 82.

15. Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 154.

16. These calculations are based on my own analysis of Charleston city directories. I counted as merchants any men who used the word "Merchants" to describe themselves, including "Hay Merchants," "Lumber Merchants," and "Wine Merchants." (I did not count "Shopkeepers" or "Factors" as merchants. I did include an "Importer French Goods" from 1825 and a "Grocers and Importers Wines" from 1835–36.) In determining their tenure in town, however, I counted men who at one point called themselves merchants regardless of whether they currently called themselves merchants. So a man who called himself a merchant in 1803 but not in 1807 would be included in the count of merchants for 1803 but would only be included in calculating merchant retention in 1807.

Because of many sources of error, these numbers should not be used as an accurate count of the total number of merchants in Charleston, but only as a suggestion of

population trends. The men who tabulated the directories often left people out, especially merchants who only spent part of the year in Charleston. Since different men assembled the directories, types of omissions probably varied from year to year. Spellings varied wildly, especially for Scottish names. The common eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practice of reusing first names for sons and nephews probably means that I inaccurately combined listings for close relatives. Merchants may have been listed twice, under their firm names and under their own names; I chose to include both listings to avoid combining listings for men with the same last names. Finally, I used James Hagy's transcriptions of the city directories, rather than the original directories.

17. Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 201–2.

18. [G Nelson], Charleston, to Mr. Bellamy, 10th June 1791, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

19. George Nelson to R Vardell, 22nd January 1791, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC; Haskins, *The Yazoo Land Companies*, 7n.

20. Thos. Morris, Charleston, to Walter Stewart Esq., 2d April 1792, Thomas Morris Papers, USC.

21. These statistics are a combination of my own research into the city directories and Robert Wright's analysis of Treasury bondholders. Robert E. Wright, "Alexander Hamilton and the Birth of a Capital Market," unpublished paper, in the possession of the author. Thanks to Bob for generously sharing his research data.

22. Mr. Beete, *The Man of the Times*, 22–23.

23. Wettereau, "The Branches of the First Bank of the United States," 72.

24. For an excellent explanation of this process, see Wright and Cowen, "Banking Historiography Essay," unpublished MS, 9–12, in the possession of the author. In general, Wright's works provide the finest introduction to the challenges and possibilities of finance in the early republic.

25. Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, vol. 2, 106.

26. Nash, "South Carolina and the Atlantic Economy," 682.

27. CF, Charleston, to Messrs. Sta. Maria & Cuesta, Havanna, April 29th 1800, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, USC.

28. Tait Wilson & Co, Charleston, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, October 6th, 1802, Ferguson & Day, New-York Historical Society (hereafter abbreviated as NYHS).

29. J F Henning for Frederick Köhnes, Charleston, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, 30th July 1803, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

30. Lorent, Knipping & Steinmetz, Charleston, to Mess Ferguson & Day, Newyork, January 31 1807, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

31. Statistics calculated by the author from Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States* (1815), 127.

32. North, "The European Rice Trade," 319–20.

33. Joseph Winthrop, Charleston, 15 February 1803, to Robert Boyd Esq, Portland. In possession of the author.

34. Lorent, Knipping & Steinmetz, Charleston, to Mess Ferguson & Day, Newyork, Jany 15 1807, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

35. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, ch. 8, 13.

36. Cotton and Martin, "The Letters of Charles Caleb Cotton, 1798–1802 (continued)," 225.

37. Bruchey, *Enterprise*, 231.

38. I am indebted to Russell Menard for this idea. Pers. comm., September 20, 2001.

39. Calculated by the author from Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States* (1815), 132.

40. Hindley & Gregorie, Charleston, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, New York, 29th Decr. 1809, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

41. Thos. Hy. Hindley, Charleston, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, New York, 7th Jany 1808, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

42. Hindley & Gregorie, Charleston, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, 15 Nov 1809, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

43. Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States* (1815), 116.

44. Calculated by the author from Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States* (1815), 131.

45. Stagg, *The War of 1812,* 34.

46. On Amelia Island, Heckscher, *The Continental System,* 137, 143; Ward, "The Commerce of East Florida," 160–79.

47. [Christopher Fitzsimons?], Charleston, to Genl. Wade Hampton, Natches, November 28, 1809, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, USC.

48. Thos. Hy. Hindley, New York, to Messrs. McConnell & Kennedy, Manchester, September 6, 1809, Papers of McConnel & Kennedy and McConnel & Co., GB 133 MCK 2/1/15, John Rylands Library, the University of Manchester. Courtesy of the University of Manchester (hereafter cited as JRL). See also John Couper, St. Simons, to James Hamilton, Esqr., Charleston, October 10, 1812, James Hamilton Papers, Duke, about purchasing "Negro cloth" at Amelia Island.

49. Henry Lord, St. Marys, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, 19th May 1809, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

50. Hindley & Gregorie, Charleston, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, New York, 2d Febry 1810, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

51. Hindley & Gregorie, Charleston, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, New York, 22d Decr. 1809, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

52. Ward, "The Commerce of East Florida," 178–79.

53. Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies," 246–47; Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America*, 190; Lewis, *The American Union*, 112.

54. Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies," 246–47.

55. John Wallace, Luca, to Mr. John Couper Merchant Sunbury, February 12th 1788, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

56. Stagg, *The War of 1812*, 26; Heckscher, *The Continental System*, 102–3.

57. Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 44.

58. William Heysham, Port au Prince, to Messrs. Jones & Clarke (59 Bay), Charleston, Septr. 19th 1791, Jones & Clarke Papers [#0331], Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as HSP).

59. Marzagalli, "Establishing Transatlantic Trade Networks," 838–39.

60. [Christopher Fitzsimons], Charleston, to John Gernon Esqr, 16th October 1805, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, USC. See also [Christopher Fitzsimons], Charleston, to John Gernon Esqr, 20th Decemr. 1805, in which Fitzsimons comments, "I entirely commit to your care and management my son Cashel."

61. Marzagalli, "Establishing Transatlantic Trade Networks," 836.

62. Bruchey, *Robert Oliver,* 176–77.

63. Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies," 251.

64. Joseph Peace, Charleston, to [Jones & Clarke?], August 17, 1797, Jones and Clarke Papers [#0331], HSP.

65. Geo Forrest, Charleston, to Messrs. Jones & Clarke, Philadelphia, August 29, 1797, Jones and Clarke Papers [#0331], HSP.

66. For a good analysis of the effects of the Haitian Revolution in Charleston, see Deaton, "Falling Darkness."

67. J.F. Henning, Charleston, to Messrs. Jones & Clarke, Philadelphia, December 5, 1797, Jones and Clarke Papers, [#0331], HSP.

68. *South Carolina State Daily Advertiser,* November 22, 1797, quoted in Meaders, "South Carolina Fugitives," 315–16.

69. J.F. Henning, Charleston, to Messrs. Jones & Clarke, Philadelphia, December 5, 1797, Jones and Clarke Papers [#0331], HSP.

70. J F Henning, Charleston, to Messrs. Jones & Clarke, Philadelphia, February 26, 1799, Jones and Clarke Papers [#0331], HSP.

71. Pompeian, "Servants to No One."

72. Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies," 248–55; Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America*, 191.

73. Böttcher, "Cuba and the Thirteen Colonies," 490.

74. This is speculation on my part, based on documented families that moved from Haiti to Charleston after the Revolution and then from Charleston to Cuba in the 1820s. Ballester, *El azúcaren Matanzas,* 306–7, 311–12.

75. Thomas, *Reminiscences,* vol. 2, 34; original emphasis. See also William Whitaker's adventures in Rae, *Turtle at Mr. Humble's*, esp. 105–9, 179.

76. Corbitt, "Shipments of Slaves."

77. CF, Charleston, to Mr. John Cunningham, [Nassau] June 1st 1802, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, USC.

78. CF, Charleston, to Mr. Patrick Welsh, Havana, 14 February 1805, Charleston Fitzsimons Papers, USC; original emphasis.

79. According to Linda Salvucci, "the bilateral trade" between Havana and Philadelphia "was driven more by Cuban demand for provisions than by the mainland demand for sugar." Salvucci, "Supply, Demand, and the Making of a Market," 44.

80. Translated by the author from de la Tabla Ducasse, *Commercio exterior de Veracruz, 1778–1821*, 175.

81. Thomas, *Reminiscences*, vol. 1, 35.

82. Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America*, 202.

83. Ibid., 198–99. The other three ports were Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

84. Salvador Larrúa-Guedes, "Con ayuda de la arqueología histórica y mediante la consulta de los documentos de archivo relativos a la entrada de buques al Puerto de La Habana, se pueden escudriñar los indicios del comercio de loza fina inglesa hacia Cuba," unpublished MS. Thank you to Dr. Larrúa-Guedes for sharing this paper with me.

85. References to specific voyages between Charleston and Veracruz from 1798 and 1799, sometimes via Havana, can be found in de la Tabla Ducasse, *Commercio exterior de Veracruz*, *1778–1821*, 311, 320–21.

86. Cotton and Martin, "The Letters of Charles Caleb Cotton," 222.

87. North, *Economic Growth of the United States*, 42–53; Adams, "American Neutrality and Prosperity," 731–32.

88. Cardozo, *Reminiscences of Charleston*, 12–13.

89. Thomas, *Reminiscences*, vol. 1, 35.

90. Brady, "Slave Trade and Sectionalism," 603–6.

91. Ibid., 608–9.

92. Ibid., 611.

93. Shugerman, "The Louisiana Purchase," 264; Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 188.

94. Shugerman, "The Louisiana Purchase"; Brady, "Slave Trade and Sectionalism."

95. McMillin, *The Final Victims*, 48, 94.

96. Thomas, *Reminiscences*, vol. 2, 35–36.

97. McMillan, *The Final Victims*, 103–5.

98. McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering*, 49–50; McMillan, *The Final Victims*, 110–14.

99. Brown, "The Reopening of the Foreign Slave Trade," 46, 48, 49.

100. Ibid., 8; Shugerman, "The Louisiana Purchase," 286–87.

101. Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist*, 369.

102. These calculations are based on my own analysis of Charleston city directories. I counted as merchants any men who used the word "Merchants" to describe themselves, including "Hay Merchants," "Lumber Merchants," and "Wine Merchants." (I did not count "Shopkeepers" or "Factors" as merchants. I did include an "Importer French Goods" from 1825 and a "Grocers and Importers Wines" from 1835–36.) In determining their tenure in town, however, I counted men who at one point called themselves merchants regardless of whether they currently called themselves merchants. So a man who called himself a merchant in 1803 but not in 1807 would be included in the count of merchants for 1803 but would only be included in calculating merchant retention in 1807.

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103. This count is based on a copy of the 1796 directory with missing pages so is probably slightly low. However, this should not affect the retention percentage.

104. Thomas, *Reminiscences*, vol. 1, 40–41. Thomas's list: "Nathaniel Russell, Kirk & Lukens, Mann & Foltz, James & Edwin Gardiner, Robert Hazelhurst & Co., Vos & Graves, Whitfield & Brown, Jennings & Wooddrop, Campbell, Harvey & Co., J. & J. Hargraves, Casper C. Schutt, Charles Banks & Co., Williamson & Stoney, John Brownlee, William Turpin, Allan, Mason & Ewing, Frederick Kohne, William & James Thayer, Tunno & Cox, E. Coffin, Thomas Tunno."

105. J. B. Dunlop diary, 1810–11, BV Dunlop, J. B., NYHS.

106. Because I tried to match names from an era in which people were cavalier about spelling, there are almost certainly some errors in this list. When I only had the surname for either the slave trader or the directory listing, I used my best judgment as to whether it was the same individual. I omitted, in my calculations, merchants whose identity was not clear for one reason or another (usually that one of the two sources only gave the first initial.) I used the entirety of McMillin's list for this calculation, which extends from 1783 to 1807 for Charleston. McMillin, *The Final Victims*, 124–31.

107. "Notes on America, No. I: Charleston, South Carolina," *The Albion: or British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly Gazette*, July 28, 1832, vol. 11, no. 8, 61. This observer visited Charleston in the mid-1820s. For a similar comment, see AG to My Dear Betsy, [April 1788], Leger & Greenwood Letterbook, William L. Clements Library, UMich. "When you walk along the Streets it reminds you of the diversity of language spoken at the Tower of Babel, for before you have walked 20 yards you meet a company of people speaking French, in two minutes you hear another set grating harsh high Dutch, another delivering their majestic Spanish, then follow a parcel of Jews clipping broken English, by & by you hear a man who talks your mother tongue, presently again you are interrupted by a jargon of Broad Scotch, & to conclude the scene an Irish dear honey is walking along at the rate of 7 miles an hour, & telling his countrywoman that there is no stirring it is so *hat* in short there are people of almost all names & nations here."

108. Walsh, "Letters of Morris & Brailsford to Thomas Jefferson," 135.

109. Farris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo*, 37; Jaher, *The Urban Establishment*, 337.

110. Jaher, *The Urban Establishment*, 337. For a similar sentiment, see Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations*, bk. 3, ch. 4.

111. Milford, *The Gardiners of Massachusetts*, 10; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 103–4.

112. Calculated by the author. In these and the following calculations, I included men whose identification was likely but not certain (e.g., when one source only gave a first initial).

113. Kaplanoff, "Making the South Solid," Table VII-3.

114. Calculated by the author using names found in *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, May 6, 1794; May 6, 1795; May 10, 1797; June 9, 1798; May 6, 1799; May 10, 1804; May 7, 1805; and May 8, 1810.

115. Calculated by the author using names found in *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, Nov. 23, 1791; Nov. 27, 1793; Feb. 27, 1796; Feb. 24, 1800; Feb. 20, 1802; Feb. 22, 1803; Feb. 18, 1804; Feb. 17, 1810.

116. Richard Harrison, Charleston, to John Day Esq Messrs. Mein Mackay & Co., Savannah, 28 Jany 1804, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

117. Michael Lazarus for Mordecai Cohen, Charleston, September 19, 1808, to L.M. Ayer, Barnwell, Louis Ayer Papers, USC.

118. Luskey, *On the Make*, 187–89.

119. G. Whitfield, Charleston, to Mr. Robert Brown, London, April 14, 1805. Messrs. Brown, Cass, & Whitfield Papers, National Archives, UK.

120. Girihadaradas, *India Calling,* 89, 94.

121. Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 86 (quotation), 137; see also Wahrman, "'Middle-Class' Domesticity Goes Public."

122. Wahrman, "'Middle-Class' Domesticity Goes Public," 412.

123. These historians have also acknowledged that the middle class may have chosen its favorite causes for self-aggrandizing reasons. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2," esp. 153–55. See also earlier treatments of the "social control" thesis, which linked the middle-class claim to morality with power over the working class, discussed in Haskell's "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1," esp. 110–12.

124. Wells and Green, Introduction to *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 3.

125. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream*, ch. 1.

126. Bailey, "'That Gainful Branch'"; Peskin, *Manufacturing Revolution*; Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America*.

127. Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, 56; Lamoreaux, *Insider Lending*.

128. Mizelle, "William Frederick Pinchbeck and the Strategy of Exposure"; Erickson, "Narratives of Antebellum Commercial Deception"; Woloson, "Hammer Time."

129. Erickson, "Narratives of Antebellum Commercial Deception."

130. Kelley (Kelly), "Wanted—A Young Man from the Country," 332–34.

131. J Rapelye, Charleston, to Mr. Paul Rapelye, New York, Nov 16 1815, Napier, Rapelye, and Bennett Records, USC.

132. October 1818 entry, Davis Thacher Diary, USC.

133. Pease and Pease, *The Web of Progress*, 100–101; Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, esp. 57–58, 84.

134. A. Ewing & J. Ross, Charleston, to Mr. John Day, Messrs. Taylor & Scarbrough, Savannah, 31 Janr. 1804, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

135. Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory*, 57.

4 / Friendship and Sympathy, Family and Stability

1. Charles Machin Memoir, UMich.

2. Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship*, chs. 3–5.

3. Bushman, *The Refinement of America*; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 14–16, 274–76.

4. On familiarity as a virtue, see Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, 57.

5. Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship*, 70.

6. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 79.

7. Jonathan Purdy, New York, to Mr. Paul Rapelye, Charleston, December 19, 1820, Napier, Rapelye, and Bennet Records, USC.

8. David Lamb, Glasgow, to Robert Henderson Esq., Philadelphia, August 11, 1800, Robert Henderson Papers [#1692] HSP.

9. David Lamb, Glasgow, to Mr. Robt. Henderson, Philadelphia, February 19, 1800, Robert Henderson Papers [#1692], HSP.

10. George Nelson to Mr. William Fiddy, Charleston, June 6, 1797, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

11. Geo. Nelson, London, to Brother and Sister [not Brother Fras.], Houlton near Wragley, October 9, 1794, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

12. G Nelson, London, to Mr. S Bellamy, 41 Queen St. N. York, October 6, 1794, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

13. Zeph[aniah] Kingsley, Liverpool, to James Hamilton, Esq., February 28, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

14. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to "My Dear Mr. Hamilton," February 2, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

15. The merchants I studied seem to have been far less emotional than the families described by Sarah Pearsall, who claimed that "by the eighteenth century wives and children still echoed claims to submission, but in a more muted way. . . . They joined sensibility to deference." Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, 99.

16. Isabella Hamilton to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, December 16, 1804, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

17. For an improvident marriage, see J Rapelye, Charleston, to Paul [addressed first care of McGregor in Liverpool, readdressed to Manchester], December 28, 1821, Napier, Rapelye, and Bennet Records, USC.

18. Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, esp. ch. 1. Everything that follows has been strongly influenced by Lawrence Stone. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*.

19. Much of the following was also true for coastal planter families. See Cashin, *A Family Venture*, ch. 1. It is worth noting that some of the families that Cashin profiles were both planters and merchants.

20. G Nelson to S Ballamy, January 18, 1789, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

21. See Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, ch. 7, for more on inequality within the family.

22. Robt. Stewart, Charleston, to Brother [Walter Stewart Esquire], Londonderry, Ireland, February 6, 1786, Thomas Morris Papers, USC.

23. [Walter Stewart?], Philada., to Mr. John McFarlane, November 1, 1789, Thomas Morris Papers, USC.

24. Isabella Hamilton ("Mrs. Hamilton"), Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, October 18, 1804, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

25. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton [care of Allan Mason & Ewing, Charleston], April 4, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

26. Charles Steedman, Clapton, to Mr. James Hamilton, Charleston, February 2, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

27. Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, ch. 7; Cashin, *A Family Venture*, 23–24, 32–44.

28. *HL Papers* XVI, 114.

29. See, e.g., James Laurens's flurry of apologies about Felix Warley, a former employee Henry distrusted. *HL Papers* IX, 203.

30. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, ch. 4; Cashin, *A Family Venture*, 17–19; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 9–12, on the desirable wife as the "sexy battleaxe."

31. See Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 9–12.

32. Rebecca Gairdner, Wooden, to My Dear James, Charleston, So. Carolina, May 10, 1806. Also see Rebecca Gairdner, Wooden, to My Dear James, Charleston, October 18, 1806. Both in James Gairdner Papers, Duke.

33. George Nelson, C'ton, to Mr. Wm Lambert, April 12, 1796, George Nelson Letter Copy Book, UNC.

34. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton [care of Allan Mason & Ewing, Charleston], April 4, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

35. In a similar vein, Sarah Pearsall has demonstrated how harsh fathers frequently were on sons. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, 124–25, ch. 5.

36. Merchants were almost always men. There are a few women listed as merchants in the city directories, but I have been unable to find papers from any of them.

37. The term "Atlantic creole" is Ira Berlin's. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 17–28.

38. On the importance of international ties to the Africans, see Coifman, "The People of the African-European Frontier," unpublished MS. Thanks to Professor Coifman for introducing me to this world.

39. A disease Hawkins caught on the trip home totally blinded him. He almost certainly never returned to Africa. Hawkins, *A History of a Voyage to the Coast of Africa*, esp. 9–12, 68–72, 85–87, 104–5, 135–38, 142–45, 149–50, 158–59.

40. Though Fraser did not call Phenda his wife in his will, they had had a wedding. Schafer, "Family Ties That Bind," 1–2; John Fraser Will, SCDAH.

41. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, February 2, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

42. Pearsall claims sensibility was often the language of the weak speaking to the strong. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, 86–87.

43. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, July 16, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

44. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, February 2, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

45. Cashin, *A Family Venture*, 21–22.

46. On women's special role in maintaining relationships, see Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes,* 280–81; on relationships and business, see Ditz, "Shipwrecked," esp. 51, 71.

47. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, January 2, 1805; Thomas Storr, Savannah, to James Hamilton Esq., Charleston, September 5, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

48. Isabella Hamilton to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, December 16, 1804, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

49. Ferguson, *The John Couper Family*, 47–48, 52.

50. Ibid., 115. A daughter, Isabella Hamilton Couper, was born in 1815. Ferguson 133.

51. Isabella Hamilton ("Mrs. Hamilton"), Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, October 18, 1804, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

52. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, May 20, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

53. Isabella Hamilton, Clapton, to My Dear Mr. Hamilton, Charleston, February 22, 1805, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

54. Lovell, *The Golden Isles of Georgia*, 148–49.

55. [Josiah Smith] to Hon'ble John Moultrie Esqr., St. Augustine, December 29, 1779, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

56. *HL Papers* V, 168, 201. Also see V, 661, 704.

57. Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*, ch. 1; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 9–12.

5 / The War of 1812 and Commercial Disaster

1. Thos Hy Hindley, Charleston, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, 13th July 1812, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

2. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 302.

3. Bickham, *The Weight of Vengeance*, 43.

4. Adams, *History of the United States of America*, vol. 1, 305. See also Lewis, *The American Union*, esp. 12, 24–40.

5. Henry Chorley, Charleston, S.C., to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, New York, 8th Jany 07, Ferguson & Day, NYHS. Chorley wrote the next day repeating the allegations.

6. Isenberg, *Fallen Founder*, 302, 312–16.

7. Lewis, *The American Union*, 38.

8. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, x, 35–37, ch. 5, ch. 7, 269.

9. Head, "The Invasions of Amelia Island"; Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 304.

10. See James Hamilton Papers, Duke; Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 150–51 passim.

11. John Couper, St. Simons, to [James Hamilton], August 9, 1812, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

12. John Couper, St. Simons, to [?], 5th Sept. 1812 and John Couper, St. Simons, to James Hamilton Esq., Charleston, 19th Sept. 1812, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

13. Arthur, *How Britain Won the War of 1812*, 156–57.

14. Pitkin, *A Statistical View* (1835), 55–56.

15. ?, Charleston, to Michael Hogan, Esq., 13th March 1811, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, USC.

16. C. I. Bürckle, Charleston, to Stephen Girard, Esq., Philadelphia, 2d April, 1815, Girard Papers, American Philosophical Society (hereafter cited as APS).

17. Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union*, 104.

18. Seybert, *Statistical Annals*, 59–61.

19. ?, Charleston, to Genl. Wade Hampton, 6th Feb 1811, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, Vol. 2, USC. See also Geo. Gibbs, New York, to Mr. Richard Carnochan, Charleston, Feby. 18, 1811 and Robt. Wilson, Liverpool, to Mr. James Hamilton, Charleston, 14th March 1811, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

20. Hindley & Gregorie, Charleston, to McConnell & Kennedy, Manchester, 20th April 1811, Papers of McConnel & Kennedy and McConnel & Co., JRL.

21. See several letters, especially James Gregorie, Charleston, to John Day, Esquire, Messrs. Ferguson & Day, New York, 4th January 1812, Jno. Garnett, Liverpool, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, 11 Jany 1812, Thos. Hy. Hindley, Charleston, to John Day Esquire, New York, 26th March 1812, Thos. Hy. Hindley, Charleston, to Mr. John Day, New York, 31st March 1812, Jno. Carnochan, Savannah, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, 3rd November 1812, Jno. Carnochan, Savannah, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, 30th Novr. 1813, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

22. Jn. Genevois, Charleston, to Stephen Girard, Esq., Philadelphia, January 19, 1813, Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

23. John Stoney, Charleston, to Stephen Girard, Esq., Philadelphia, 26 May 1813, Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

24. Andreas, *Smuggler Nation*, 87.

25. James Johnston, Savannah, to James Hamilton Esq., Charleston, 12th Oct. 1812, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

26. James Johnston, Savannah, to James Hamilton Esq, Charleston, 23d July 1812, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

27. Jno. Carnochan, Savannah, to Messrs. Ferguson & Day, 30th Novr. 1813, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

28. Carnochan & Mitchel, Savannah, to Mr. Samuel Ferguson, 7th Novr. 1814, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

29. John Stoney, Charleston, to Stephen Girard, Esq, Philadelphia, 18th August, 1813, Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

30. Pitkin, *A Statistical View* (1835), 56. Value of U.S.-made exports from South Carolina in 1811 is $210,295; in 1814, $1,428.

31. Savannah, 1805–14, Aug Box, Trading Voyages, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

32. Charleston *Courier*, Aug. 28, 1811.

33. Ibid., Sept. 2, 1811.

34. Ibid., Sept. 6, 1811.

35. Wettereau, "The Branches of the First Bank of the United States," 98–100, 93.

36. "Office of Discount and Deposit, Charleston, 4 March 1811," Stephen Girard Papers, APS. After the First Bank was dissolved, its remaining assets were acquired by Philadelphian merchant Stephen Girard. Girard's papers were eventually donated to Girard College, and are easily accessible on microfilm at the APS.

37. "Office of Discount and Deposit, New Orleans, 27th February 1811," Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

38. Van Fenstermaker, "The Statistics of American Commercial Banking," esp. 401; Rousseau, "Monetary Policy and the Dollar," 128–29.

39. CF, Charleston, to Stephen Girard, Esq, 6th June 1812, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, vol. 2, USC.

40. CF, Charleston, to Langdon Cheves Esqr., 19 March 1812, Christopher Fitzsimons Papers, vol. 2, USC.

41. Lesesne, *The Bank of the State of South Carolina*, 14.

42. Bodenhorn, *State Banking in Early America*, 230, 244.

43. Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America*, 228.

44. Ibid., 168.

45. Calculated by the author. This percentage includes men whose identity was likely but not definite (including men who were listed by a first initial only on one list). Bank officers listed in *The Palladium of Knowledge . . . for . . . 1813*.

46. On gentility among nonelites, see Milford, *The Gardiners of Massachusetts*, 24–25.

47. Thomas, *Reminiscences*, vol. 1, 33–34. The exceptions were Adam Tunno and William Crafts.

48. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste*, 25.

49. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 13.

50. Gourdin, "Gourdins of Charleston," 534–35.

51. Bushman, *The Refinement of America*.

52. Thomas Smith, So.Car., to John Ferguson Esq. [dear Ferguson], Messrs. Ogden Ferguson & Co., New York, Jan 13 1827, Ferguson Family Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundation.

53. Kilbride, *An American Aristocracy*, 2; Friend, "Belles, Benefactors, and the Blacksmith's Son," 93.

54. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste*, 24; Kilbride, *An American Aristocracy,* 18. Planters were not always successful in appearing genteel; some felt that they were "crude, debauched, money grubbing, and patriarchal" compared to their northern elite peers. Kilbride, *An American Aristocracy*, 47.

55. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste*, 24.

56. Green, *Military Education*, 102–7; Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, esp. pt. 2; Kilbride, *An American Aristocracy,* 44–45.

57. For gentility in the South, see Kilbride, *An American Aristocracy*; Friend, "Belles, Benefactors, and the Blacksmith's Son," 92–112; Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, ch. 3.

58. Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 66–67.

59. McMillin, *The Final Victims*, 88–89.

60. "Notes on America," 61.

61. Ibid.

62. On Charleston's importance as a center for Southern thought, see Moltke-Hansen, "The Expansion of Intellectual Life," 5–6, 41–44.

63. Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 41.

64. John S. Adams, Charleston, to Stephen Girard, Esq., January 26th, 1811, Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

65. Richard Milne, Philada. to Mr. Thomas Scott, From Savannah, at Messrs Ferguson & Day, New York, Augt. 25 1812, Ferguson & Day, NYHS.

6 / Mercantile Professionalism and Charleston as a Cotton Port

1. Pease and Pease, *The Web of Progress*, 216–17.

2. Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union*, 104.

3. "Extract of a Letter to the Editor of the Southern Patriot, dated Ja queme', (Hayti), January 17, 1819," Charleston *City Gazette*, Feb. 23, 1819, 2; for a similar complaint from Cuba in 1817, see Chambers, *No God but Gain*, 90.

4. For piracy around Cuba, see Chambers, *No God but Gain,* 90–92; ch. 7, 127–29. See, e.g., "Captain Eaton," Charleston *Carolina Gazette,* Dec. 5, 1818, 3.

5. Head, "Slave Smuggling by Foreign Privateers," quote on 458; Cartwright, *Galveston*, ch. 5.

6. Hollander, "Underground on the High Seas," esp. 128–31; Chambers, *No God but Gain*, 84–85. Hollander argues for heavy Baltimore involvement in the slave trade; Chambers, for New England.

7. C. I. Bürckle, Charleston, to Stephen Girard, Esq., Philadelphia, 2d April, 1815, Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

8. October 1818 entry, Davis Thacher Diary, USC. Davis Thacher was the audience for this diary; the writer's first name remains unknown.

9. "Notes on America, No. I: Charleston, South Carolina," *The Albion: or British, Colonial, and Foreign Weekly Gazette*, July 28, 1832, vol. 11, no. 8, 61. Though it is also possible to find local anti-Semitism, such as John Mill's comments that "every Jew & Vagabond in the place is hawking" discounted English goods. John. Mill, Charleston, to Mess Day, Downes & Eastburn, July 3 1817, Day, Downes & Eastburn Correspondence, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

10. John Stoney, Charleston, to Stephen Girard Esq., Philadelphia, 19 April 1819, Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

11. John Stoney, Charleston, to Stephen Girard Esq., Philadelphia, 22 April 1819, Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

12. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War,* 39–40.

13. Jaher, *The Urban Establishment*, 347–48.

14. Cardozo, *Reminiscences of Charleston*, 46–47.

15. Wright, *One Nation under Debt*, 332. Calculated by the author using statistics provided by Sylla, Wilson, and Wright, "Price Quotations in Early United States Securities Markets."

16. Rothbard, *The Panic of 1819*, esp. 18–19.

17. Bodenhorn, *State Banking in Early America*, 223–24, 229–31. Banks in New Orleans would be similarly focused on merchants. Marler, *The Merchants' Capital*, 31.

18. Jaher, *The Urban Establishment*, 348.

19. Bodenhorn, *State Banking in Early America*, 239; Jaher, *The Urban Establishment*, 348–49.

20. Cardozo, *Reminiscences of Charleston*, 47.

21. Seybert, *Statistical Annals*, 91.

22. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 26.

23. John. Mill, Charleston, to Mess Day Downes & Eastburn, June 11 1817, Day, Downes & Eastburn Correspondence, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

24. John. Mill, Charleston, to Mess Day, Downes & Eastburn, July 3 1817, Day, Downes & Eastburn Correspondence, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

25. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 39.

26. Wm. Burgoyne, Charleston, to Messrs. Day, Downes, & Eastburn, 12th June 1819, Day, Downes & Eastburn Correspondence, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

27. [Stephen Girard], Philadelphia, to Mr. John Stoney, Charleston, 23d May 1824, Stephen Girard Papers, APS.

28. Bruchey, *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy*, Table 3A.

29. Cardozo, *Reminiscences of Charleston*, 12–13.

30. Bruchey, *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy*, Table 3L.

31. Menard, "Slavery, Economic Growth, and Revolutionary Ideology," 257.

32. Ibid.

33. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 41–42.

34. Thos Hy. Hindley, Charleston, to Messrs. Ogden Day & Co., 22nd Decr 1820, Bolton Ogden Letters, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

35. *HL Papers* V, 661.

36. "South Carolina Produce exported, from the port of Charles-Town only, from the 1st day of November, 1763, to the 1st of November, 1764," *South-Carolina Gazette*, Monday, October 29 to Monday, November 5, 1764. See also *South-Carolina Gazette*, Monday, October 8 to Monday, October 15, 1764; *South-Carolina Gazette*, Saturday, April 27 to Saturday, May 4, 1765.

37. *HL Papers* V, 499.

38. Nash, "South Carolina and the Atlantic Economy," 682.

39. *Miller's Planters' and Merchants' Almanac, for . . . 1829*.

40. L. Trapmann, Charleston S/C, to Messrs. Ogden, Ferguson and Co., New York, February 18, 1830, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

41. Hidy, *The House of Baring*, 75. Edward Baptist agrees, and gives him even more importance: "It was Vincent Nolte who made modernization possible." Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, 85–87.

42. See, e.g., Robt. Wilson, Liverpool, to Mr. James Hamilton of St. Simons, care of Richd. Carnochan, Esq., Charleston, July 24, 1811 (which is written on a preprinted letter) for an analysis of the volume of imports and price current from Duff Findlay, and Co., Liverpool, July 20, 1811, James Hamilton Papers, Duke.

43. Trapmann, Schmidt and Co., Charleston, to Messrs. McConnel and Kennedy, Manchester, January 1, 1824; October 9, 1824; February 21, 1825; June 4, 1825, all in the McConnel and Kennedy Papers, South Caroliniana Library, USC. L. Trapmann, Charleston, to Mr. Thomas Lamb, Boston, June 12, 1826, Lamb Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; Peterson, Jahncke and Co., Charleston, to Messrs. Ogden, Day and Co., New York, September 15, 1823, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

44. Jno. Fraser and Co., Charleston, to Messrs. Ogden, Ferguson and Co., New York, September 3, 1828; W. C. Molyneux, Charleston, to Messrs. Ogden, Ferguson and Co., New York, December 2, 1828; both in Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

45. "Gazette Weekly Letter Sheet, 1831," Monday, March 28, 1831, by Simms and Duryea, included in Joseph Battersby, Charleston, to Messrs. Ogden, Ferguson and Co., New York, March 30, 1831, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

46. The practice of reprinting trade statistics from other cities in the local newspaper might have encouraged quantification. See *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, Apr. 5, 1821, which printed exports from Savannah.

47. Cohen, *A Calculating People*, 152, 40.

48. John Longsdon, Charleston, to Messrs. McConnell and Kennedy, Manchester, April 10, 1819, McConnel and Kennedy Papers, USC.

49. Fred[rick] Smith, Warm Springs, Va., to Messrs. Ogden, Ferguson and Co., New York, August 22, 1832, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

50. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, 40.

51. Gourdin and Smith, Charleston, to Messrs. Ogden, Ferguson and Co., New York, April 2, 1832, Ogden, Ferguson & Co, NYHS.

52. Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes*, 444–45.

53. Jaher, *The Urban Establishment*, 45–48, 175–77.

54. But what about other Southern cotton ports? I would like to be able to compare the fortunes of Charleston's merchants in the 1820s to those of their colleagues in New Orleans, but so far data are lacking. Edward Baptist's account of trade in New Orleans ends in 1820 by implying that entrepreneurs continued to flourish, but his exemplar of mercantile success, Vincent Nolte, overextended himself in the middle of the decade and ended up leaving New Orleans permanently in 1829. Scott Marler assumes that the "growth of cotton culture beginning in the 1820s proved greatly advantageous to the established commercial channels flowing through New Orleans" but offers no information on the size of the mercantile population or the merchants' wealth. Accessed May 3, 2016.

A look at New Orleans's surviving city directories is suggestive. In 1811, there are 102 merchants listed. By 1822, this number had increased to 459. The 1824 directory, which only exists for names beginning A-V, lists 224 merchants. (For the same range in 1822, 432 names were listed, or almost twice as many.) By 1832, the next year for

which a directory has survived, 294 merchants were listed. Over the same period of time, the amount of cotton produced in Louisiana was increasing much faster than in South Carolina.

What the city directories suggest to me is a bubble in mercantile fortunes in New Orleans at the beginning of the 1820s, followed by a stagnant period. Historians of New Orleans may have made the same mistake that Freehling did about Charleston—assuming that a growing volume of trade meant that merchants were prosperous. More research in this area would be very welcome. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, 85–92; Nolte, *Fifty Years in Both Hemispheres*, ch. 18, 347–48; Marler, *The Merchants' Capital*, 27.

My analysis is dependent on several online city directories, transcribed mostly by Colleen Fitzpatrick. *1811 New Orleans City Directory*, transcribed by Colleen Fitzpatrick, available at http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/orleans/history/directory/1811nocd.txt; *1822 New Orleans City Directory*, transcribed by Colleen Fitzpatrick, available at http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/orleans/history/directory/1822nocd.txt; *1824 New Orleans City Directory*, transcribed by Trisha Pohlmann, Linda Dean, and Colleen Fitzpatrick, available at http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/orleans/history/directory/1824nocd.txt; *1832 New Orleans City Directory*, transcribed by Colleen Fitzpatrick, available at http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/orleans/history/directory/1832nocd.txt. Bruchey Table 3E.

55. C [Charles?] Rapelye, Charleston, to Doctor, April 12, 1821, Napier, Rapelye, and Bennett Records, USC. He added, "Betsy says you are a queer Bitch__ I think worse of you than that."

56. Excellent books on this subject include Bushman, *The Refinement of America*; Wilson, *Decency & Disorder*.

57. Wilson, *Decency & Disorder*, 60.

58. Ibid., 361.

59. Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness*; Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*.

60. Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*; Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household*, esp. pref. and ch. 3; Edwards, *The People and Their Peace*,102–11, 220–29, for a sophisticated analysis of changes in the nature of patriarchy.

61. Seigel, *Modernity and Bourgeois Life*, ch. 1.

62. C, Philadelphia, to Morris Smith, Huntsville, Alabama, March 2nd. This letter was written to Smith after he had left Charleston, and the HSP has placed it in a folder labeled "Letters to Morris Smith, 1828–1867." Stewardson Family Papers, [#0632D], HSP.

63. Haltunnen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*, ch. 5.

64. *HL Papers* XVI, 110.

65. See also [Josiah Smith, Charleston], to Colo. John Bayard, Philadelphia, July 12, 1783, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

66. Thomas Napier, New York, to Rvd. and Mrs. Erastus Hopkins, April 17, 1848, Thomas Napier Papers, USC.

67. Engel, *The Middleton Family*, 259.

68. Charles Manigault, "Book containing loose papers," 1776–1872, WPA Historical Project. No. 465–33–3-14, transcribed by Mrs. Nora F. Davey, 1938, USC, 47–48.

69. Anonymous, *Selections from the Collection of the Carolina Art Association*, 54–55.

70. Thomas Middleton Letterbook, Thomas Middleton Papers, 1787–1849 (1168.02.01), SCHS.

71. Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, ch. 1, 4; Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household*, ch. 3.

72. *HL Papers* X, 143–4.

73. Thomas Napier, Charleston, to My Dearly Beloved Ann, Northampton, Mass., [January 1, ca. 1830], Thomas Napier Papers, USC.

74. Schafer, *Anna Kingsley*, 1–12; quotation on p. 19. While their marriage may not have been legally valid, both Zephaniah and Anna seem to have considered themselves to be married.

75. Ibid., 28.

76. Ibid., 48–49.

77. Child, "Letter from New York (1842)," 109.

78. Thomas, *Reminiscences*, vol. 1, 33.

79. Kennedy-Haflett, "'Moral Marriage,'" 217.

80. Kennedy-Haflett, "'Moral Marriage,'" 224–25, 219, 210–11. Pease and Pease commented on the small amount of stock that Tunno owned, compared with a similarly successful Boston-based merchant; Tunno may have owned less stock because it was more difficult for him to give it to Bettingall than other forms of wealth. Pease and Pease, *The Web of Progress*, 19.

81. Nov. 14, 1830, William Ogilby Journal 1830–1, SCHS. Describes Adam Tunno as "one of the oldest British Residents in Charleston . . . he has been upwards of 50 years in this country; is very much respected by all who know him." See also Nov. 21, Nov. 30, Dec. 14.

82. Wolkoff, "A Crisis of Legitimacy."

83. Koger, *Black Slaveowners*, 52.

84. Will of William Ancrum, *Wills* 31(1807–1818), 84, SCDAH.

85. Conversation with Booker Brooks. Mr. Brooks also related his genealogy in Hal Drucker, "Cab Calloway: More Than Meets the Hi-Di-Ho," *50+ LifeStyles*, http://50plusny.com/news/2012/apr/06/cab-calloway-more-meets-hi-di-ho/?page=4; accessed May 3, 2016.

86. Will of John Fraser, SCDAH.

87. Schafer, "Family Ties That Bind," 7.

88. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, 55.

89. [Josiah Smith, Charleston] to Mr. George Appleby, June 16, 1775, Josiah Smith Letter Book, RASP.

90. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 328–29.

91. Hamilton, *Negro Plot,* available at http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hamilton/hamilton.html; accessed May 3, 2016.

92. 1797-06-21, *New York Minerva*.

93. 1799-07-17, *Charleston City Gazette*.

94. 1800-03-24, *New York Mercantile Advertiser*.

95. 1806-03-27, *New-York Gazette*.

96. 1808-11-18, *Charleston Courier*; 1812-01-03, *Charleston City Gazette*.

97. 1815-10-28, *Charleston City Gazette*.

98. 1815-10-27, *Charleston City Gazette*; 1820-01-25, *Massachusetts New-England Palladium*.

99. 1812-02-25, *Charleston City Gazette*; 1814-01-17, *Boston Daily Advertiser*; 1821-07-03, *Charleston City Gazette*.

100. 1812-02-25, *Charleston City Gazette*.

101. 1819-11-20, *South Carolina Southern Evangelical Intelligencer*, 1822-12-12, *Charleston Courier*.

102. 1804-11-10, *Charleston City Gazette*.

103. 1818-09-05, *Charleston City Gazette*.

104. 1820-09-04, Charleston *City Gazette*; 1818-09-17, *Charleston City Gazette* ("Committee on East and South-Bay-streets," "Committee on Contracts, "Committee on Accounts," "Committee on Ways and Means," "Committee on Retrenchments"); 1820-09-04, *Charleston City Gazette*; 1820-09-13, *Charleston City Gazette*.

105. 1820-10-20, *Charleston City Gazette*; 1822-08-31, *Charleston City Gazette*.

106. Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators."

107. The role of the "committee of vigilance and safety" was "to aid the intendant in the execution of the laws; to cooperate with him during the recess of council, in all those measures necessary for exploring the causes and character of the existing disturbance, and bringing to light and punishment the suspected and guilty." Hamilton, *Negro Plot*, http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hamilton/hamilton.html.

108. Jacob, Charleston, to Paul, July 15, 1822, Paul Rapelye Papers, Duke.

109. 1822-09-23, *Connecticut Mirror*, "An Account of the Late Intended Insurrection among a Portion of the Blacks of the City of Charleston Published by the Authority of the Corporation of Charleston."

110. *Charleston Mercury*, September 11, 1835. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, cites this letter but gives an incorrect date in the footnote.

111. Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 152.

112. "Negro Plot at Charleston," 10-12-1822, Eastport *Sentinel*.

113. "The Papers from the South," 1822-08-02, New York *Spectator*.

114. "Twenty-two culprits," 1822-08-09, Rhode-Island *American*.

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116. "Slavery," 1822-12-28, *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*.

117. Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic*, 252.

118. Ibid., 510–11.

119. Thomas Napier, New York, to Andrew Napier Esq., Newark Strathaven Scotland, 16th December 1847, Thomas Napier Papers, USC.

120. See, e.g., Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*, ch. 3 and conclusion; Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, 8; Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, ch. 8.

121. Margaret Hunt's book on the middling sort in England covers from 1680 to 1780; Barry and Brooks's anthology begins in 1550. Hunt, *The Middling Sort*; Barry and Brooks, *The Middling Sort of People*.

122. Johnston analyzed this problem very astutely. Johnston, "Historians and the American Middle Class," 299.

123. See Haltunnen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*; Stansell, *City of Women*; Bender, *The Antislavery Debate*.

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